Marxism Today

heoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party
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John Gollan
Marxism and the Political Organisation of the Workers

Paul Meier
Frederick Engels and William Morris

Vic Allen
Contemporary Capitalism and Revolutionary Change

Discussion:
James Harvey
Strategy of Socialist Revolution in Britain

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MARXISM TODAY

THEORETICAL AND DISCUSSION JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Volume 16, Number 5

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Editorial Comments

DIRECT rule imposed on Northern Ireland by the Heath Govt. means less democracy not more for the people who have already suffered more than enough at the hands of British imperialism.

Yet it does one thing—it demonstrates the depth of the crisis that Unionism and the British imperialist control over Northern Ireland have been thrown into. Heath did not just reject the Tory Unionist alliance for nothing, for the Heath-Faulkner axis to break it needed all the courage and steadfastness of the Irish anti-Unionist masses.

It was the mass civil disobedience campaign and Faulkner's failure to break it through his hoped for "military solution" that forced Heath to ditch his man. Heath's decision to take the immediate power to oppress out of the hands of the ruling Unionist clique is a great victory for the democratic forces in the North.

But the imposition of Whitelaw and his Commission means less democracy, it is not a question of one man one vote, but all men, no votes. There are also dangers.

Whitehall hopes to be able to divide the anti-Unionist masses while the background is the Tory Govt's determination to see Ireland, North and South, dragged into the Common Market behind Britain. Faulkner's policies of repression were threatening the ability of Jack Lynch in the South to smother the opposition to the Market and win his referendum on May 7th.

Above all, the whole Stormont system of repression remains, internment, Special Powers and all the rest. Heath has not yet seriously challenged the Unionist Right where it hurts and until he does one cannot judge their preparedness to use force.

Here in Britain we cannot be proud of the part we have played. Faulkner was sacked by the people of Northern Ireland and we did little enough to help. The demands of the Civil Rights movement remain the central issue and we must back them here with a Bill of Rights forced on Heath. Unionism has long been seen as a block to further advance in Ireland by the British monopoly capitalists. That it should be the Prime Minister who has done most to help the monopolies that removed Stormont should not be a surprise, but rather a warning.

The future Heath plans for Northern Ireland is not a future of democracy. Now that responsibility has been openly taken up by those who in the past preferred to manage from behind the scenes the need for the Labour movement here to act is all the greater.

The internees must be released, all repressive legislation removed, the troops got off the streets and into barracks pending a complete withdrawal, discrimination must be ended and free elections held under PR.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE PEOPLE OF NAMIBIA

Sponsored by over 60 organisations from many countries, an International Conference in support of the Namibian peoples' struggle for independence is to be held May 26-28 in Brussels.

In 1966 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which terminated South Africa's mandate over South West Africa. Great Britain and France questioned the competence of the Assembly to take such a step and the question was referred by the Security Council to the International Court of Justice. In June 1971 the Court delivered the opinion:—

> "that the continued presence of South Africa in Namibia being illegal, South Africa is under obligation to withdraw its administration from Namibia immediately and thus put an end to its occupation of the Territory."

Britain plays a shameful part in the United Nations by her constant refusal to back any moves which criticise or propose action against the South African apartheid regime and the progressive movement of this country has, therefore, special responsibilities to develop the campaign in support of the Namibian people.

The effect of the International Court's judgment inside Namibia was immediate. There were strikes of students in schools, and the leaders of the Ovambokango and Lutheran Churches, which count two thirds of Namibia's population as their members, addressed an open letter to South Africa's Prime Minister, calling on him to abide by the Court's decision. In December, industry was

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paralysed by the strike of 20,000 workers demanding revision of their contracts imposed under apartheid labour laws. Activity by the South West African People's Organisation was stepped up.

Since this crisis developed, the "native reserves" have been sealed off, and the authorities are anxious to conceal the extent of the opposition they face.

In spite of the arbitrary arrests, shootings by the police into innocent crowds, detentions in concentration camps, opposition to South African occupation will continue to grow.

The aims of the Conference are to internationalise the case of Namibia and to bring pressure on those states like Britain which support South Africa, as well as to mobilise political, moral and material support for the South West African People's Organisation. The Conference should command widespread support from all progressive and labour movement organisations in this country to ensure a powerful representation which can mobilise the British people to reject Tory support for South African apartheid in Namibia and extend solidarity to the courageous struggle of her people.

FRENCH COMMUNISTS OPPOSE REFERENDUM

The French Party paper *L'Humanité* denounced the referendum the day after it was announced as using the Common Market issue as a "pretext for an internal political operation". In fact Government spokesmen have let it be known that an affirmative result would be regarded as an approval of the government's whole policy internal and external. In addition it is a blatant attempt to split the parties of the Left, especially the Communist Party and the Socialist Party. "Well played Mr. Pompidou" said *Le Monde*, showing how much a referendum on an issue of such importance is regarded merely as a sort of trump card in the game of political manoeuvring.

Voting NO to oppose this sort of political machination is a sufficient reason in itself but the CPF is in addition opposed to the projected enlargement of the Common Market. Georges Marchais, the Party's Assistant General Secretary, said in a recent issue of *France Nouvelle* "Since the creation of the Common Market our Party has denounced it as a measure aimed at reinforcing the domination over our country of the large international monopolies". He points out in the same interview that none of the promises about improving the conditions of the French people through the Common Market have been realised. He also denounces the projected development of supra-national institutions as aiming to create . . . a new Holy Alliance of capitalist governments".

The interview ends with a call for a massive mobilisation of all the Party branches, members and sympathisers, to fight for an answer of NON to the "referendum plebiscite".

THE EVENTS AT RENAULT

The events and commentaries surrounding the killing of the Maoist, Pierre Iverney, at a Renault factory have been very important from this point of view.

Ultra-Leftists and bourgeois commentators alike have discovered once again the reactionary nature of the CPF as an upholder of the present regime! For *Evening Standard* Paris gossip columnist Sam White this was revealed as in a "blinding flash", whereas for the *Red Mole* the CGT and the CPF predictably "foamed at the mouth in a fit of reactionary hysteria".

Despite these penetrating insights it remains beyond question that all attempts to engage the Renault workers in leftist antics have been a total failure. In addition the funeral demonstration for Pierre Overney did not reflect the growing strength of the Leftists but the increasingly uncomfortable position of the Socialist Party and the CFDT who supported it, caused by their failure to reach agreements with the CPF and the CGT on a common programme to defeat the monopolies.

L'Humanité Dimanche carried a very interesting article (March 8, 1972) entitled "X-ray of a machination". After giving a history of police manipulation of anarchist and ultra-leftist groups—including photos of, for example, police overturning cars in 1968 in order to create an atmosphere of chaos—it goes on to discuss the situation at Renault. The leftists have claimed that they had achieved some success with workers in the Renault factory. The article quotes M. Thomas, the personnel manager, who admitted that leftists who had been taken on had not been required to pass the normal tests for the jobs they did. An example is given of a certain Aboulker in department FG who was continually leaving his job to spread his particular leftist gospel. He became such a nuisance that the head of his section tried to get rid of him *but found that he couldn't!*

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Finally he was taken to the factory gates and kicked out by the workers themselves (the majority of whom were immigrants in this section).

The article also reports a number of physical attacks on CP and CGT leaders in the factory. The management has tried to use the disturbances as a pretext to hold up the negotiations for improved conditions and this has been resolutely condemned by the CGT at a powerful factory gate meeting—the largest for a number of years. It is interesting that one of the branch secretaries in Renault reported that he could not remember a period when workers came so much to Party members to ask for explanations.

MORE FRENCH MARXIST WRITING

THE Maurice Thorez Institute in Paris has just published two particularly valuable books, full of lessons for Marxists in Britain even though their subject is the history of the French people. One, *Le Front Populaire* (175 pages), deals with the great struggle of the French people in 1934-39 for democracy and against Fascism, in which the leading part was played by the French Communist Party at the head of the working class of their country. It consisits of five essays, in one of which (by J. Chambez) the discussion of whether the Communist Party should have participated in the Popular Front Government of 1936 (pp. 59-62) is of special interest. So is the next, in which the description by Jean Bruhat of the counter-offensive let loose against that Government by the big monopolies (pp. 72-79, 80-81), is singularly instructive. The chapter on relations between the French Communist Party and the Communist International, by Georges Cogniot, adds considerably to our knowledge on a subject which the enemies of Communism constantly drag up in Britain too. The fight to save the Spanish Republic and against the criminal sham of "non-intervention" is described in some detail by Claude Gindin in the last essay.

The second volume, *De la Guerre a la libération* (127 pages) consists of four essays on France from 1939 to 1945. Members of our party still come up, from time to time—in school and university textbooks as well as in newspapers and magazines—against the lie that the French Communist Party "helped the Nazis"—a lie launched in 1939 by the parties of big business who had procured the overthrow of the Popular Front Government, and later co-operated with Hitler right up to 1944. The outstanding role of the French Communists and of the French workers, from July 1940 onwards, in launching the resistance movements which by 1943 had grown into a powerful force, is also a subject at best of deliberate silence, but more usually of much false witness. The four essays in this book—by Germaine Willard on the class and political contradictions of the "phoney war" period (1939-June 1940), by the late Victor Joannes on the collaborators during the Nazi occupation and the beginnings of the Resistance, by Francois Hincker, on the latter's full development and particularly on the working class struggle which in reality drove the movement forward, and by Jean Elleinstein on "Liberation: Hopes and Disappointments"—provide a mass of information generally unknown in Britain. Those who can read French will derive powerful help from both these handy little books.

SPECIAL "DIMITROV" NUMBER

To mark the 90th birthday of Georgi Dimitrov—the legendary anti-Nazi hero, leader of the Communist International during one of its most fateful periods and first President of the Bulgarian Peoples Republic, we shall be issuing a special number in June (June 18 is the actual birthday) or, if this is not possible for technical reasons, in July.

This issue will contain articles on the Leipzig Trial (of Dimitrov and three other Bulgarian Communists), the London counter-trial, and the "Release Dimitrov" campaign here in Britain, articles on Dimitrov's role in the early years of the Bulgarian Communist Party and in the Bulgarian People's Republic, his role at the 7th World Congress of the Communist International, and extracts from his writings and speeches. There will also be photographs and facsimiles of leaflets, posters, etc.

We appeal to all who participated in the "Release Dimitrov" campaign and in the London counter trial, to write in their accounts of their experiences and recollections and, wherever possible, to send us photographs, copies of leaflets, posters etc. These will all be carefully looked after and returned wherever requested.

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

The Society for Friendship with Bulgaria is organising a meeting to mark Dimitrov's 90th birthday, at the Mahatma Ghandi Hall, on Friday, June 9, at 7.30 p.m.

Ted Graham, General Secretary of the

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Co-operative Party, will be the chairman and there will be Bulgarian speakers and also, it is hoped, D. N. Pritt, QC. Actors will recite passages from the various speeches made at the Leipzig Trial.

ELEANOR MARX

Towards the end of May, Lawrence and Wishart will publish the first volume—complete in itself—of a two-volume biography of Eleanor Marx (Tussy), the youngest daughter of Karl Marx.*

The biographer, Yvonne Kapp, has produced a work of outstanding scholarship, humanity and readability—qualities not always combined. This book is remarkable not only for its unfolding of the character of a lively child and independent young woman, but for the new light it sheds on the life of the whole Marx family in London and on the father's character as evinced in his family circle while he fought with ill health and poverty to complete the writing of *Capital*. No book hitherto published has so intimately and with so much human understanding traced the personal life of Karl Marx with his wife, Jenny, and his three surviving daughters.

Many details are revealed about Marx's work, his friendship with Engels and the help Engels gave both to him and to his family, Mrs. Marx's trials, her endeavours to keep up appearances before the neighbours and the unstinting support she gave to her husband, and such little known incidents as Marx's endeavour to become a naturalised British subject.

Throughout the whole we see Eleanor's growing up into the woman who was later to play so active a part in the British labour movement. This first volume ends with Marx's death. Eleanor had already met Edward Aveling, who was to play so large and finally so unhappy a part in her later life; his character and antecedents are sketched in this volume.

AN ANTHOLOGY OF APARTHEID

Lawrence and Wishart are publishing this month, in paperback at £1 jointly with Seven Seas Books, Berlin, a volume of contemporary writings from South Africa.**

This book states the case against Apartheid. The plaintiffs are the sixteen and a half million oppressed non-White South Africans who are no longer willing to supply the cheap labour to support some three and a half million White South Africans in a life of privilege and plenty. All the authors have themselves experienced the brutalities and indignities of this doctrine which permeates every sphere of life. Their writings cover the origins and economic structure of Apartheid; its "educational" system, or system of schools for servitude; the Bantu Homelands policy that robs Africans of their land; the effects of Apartheid on South African culture; the fabric of South African sport; the Government's military buildup; the role of the Communist Party of South Africa and of the working class; the development of the South African revolution, its strategy and tactics; and lastly an analysis of the revolutionary programme of the African National Congress.

The volume also contains examples of poetry which express the aspirations of the African people and their militant struggle for freedom.

FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY, THE STATE AND WOMEN'S LIB

Lawrence and Wishart are publishing this month, too, a new edition of Engels' classic work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State.**

In this work, as is very well known, Engels made use of the researches of the American anthropologist Morgan, and entered into an extensive examination of the evolution of woman's place in society. It is high time an edition was prepared with a modern critical introduction, since of course more recent researches have revealed a very great deal more factual knowledge than was available to Engels when he wrote. This introduction has now been supplied by an American anthropologist, Eleanor B. Leacock. Her introduction, of some sixty pages, makes a brilliant and lucid assessment of Engels' work in the light of contemporary knowledge. And in particular she discusses—with the advantage of being not only a social scientist but a woman—what Engels had to say on the status of women and its meaningfulness for Women's Liberation today.

Everyone with a Marxist library should include in it this new edition of a classic work.

---

* *Eleanor Marx, part i: Family Life*. By Yvonne Kapp. Lawrence and Wishart, 320 pages, £4.50.

** *Apartheid*, edited by Alex La Guma. Lawrence and Wishart. Paperback £1.

* F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, with an introduction by Eleanor B. Leacock. Lawrence and Wishart, paperback, £1.50.

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"COMMUNIST UNIVERSITY OF LONDON 1972"

The Communist University of London 1972 will be the fourth annual gathering of communist students, specialists and academics since the first University met in the summer of 1969.

During the nine days between Saturday July 22 and Sunday July 30 the participants will be involved in discussions and seminars in a wide variety of subjects, and will have the opportunity to debate the strategy for socialist revolution in Britain with leading members of the Communist Party.

The following specialist courses are being held:—

Science and Technology	Literature
Sociology	Art and Design
History	Economics
Philosophy	Education

and two courses in Politics will be run concurrently:—

Imperialism and National Liberation.

Class Struggle and the State.

A varied programme of social-political events is being organised for the evenings.

More information about the Communist University can be obtained from Student Dept. (CUL 1972), 16 King Street, London, WC2.

APOLOGY

We apologise to our readers for some serious technical mistakes in our April issue.

Instead of "April" being indicated as the month of issue, the word "March" appeared on the front cover, thus creating confusion. In addition, on the inside front cover the page numbers for individual articles were not given.

We are enclosing with this issue the front and inside covers of the April issue as they should have been and hope our readers will be able to make the necessary change.

FRANK GRAHAM—PUBLISHER

May we strongly recommend our readers to study the book list of Frank Graham, publisher of Newcastle-upon-Tyne,[1] which contains a great wealth of books and pamphlets treating the life, social conditions, songs and struggles of the working people. They cover particularly that area of the North East, which, for reasons that still deserve further examination, has a more continuous tradition of working class culture than any other part of Britain.

Frank Graham and his wife entered the world of publishing very modestly, selling prints. The first book published was a guide to Holy Island. Some ten years ago he began to put out a number of booklets on Old Inns and Taverns, and also on Smuggling, many of which he wrote himself.

Then, about 1966, he turned more seriously to books, some original, some facsimiles, and has, by now published some 145 books and booklets in more than a million copies.

He has to his credit the publication of some collections of those magnificent and truly popular North East songs including a *Tyneside Songster*, a *Beuk o' Newcassel Songs* by J. Crowhall, a collection *Joe Wilson Sings*, a *Geordie Song Book* and two booklets edited by G. Polwarth (with music) *North Country Songs* and *Songs of the North.*

He has put out some fine topographical reprints like T. Dibden's *Newcastle in 1836*, Wrightson's *Directory of Birmingham* (1918) and a whole series of Railway Views of the 1830's.

In the field of history we would point to N. Milne's *Press of Northumberland and*

[1] Obtainable from Frank Graham, 6 Queen's Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 2PL.

PARIS AND POLITICS

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Durham (a press which incidentally played a big part in defending and conserving working class culture in the area), a well illustrated *Northumberland and Durham: a Social Miscellany* and a study by David Dougan of *A Great Gun-Maker: Life of Lord Armstrong.*

One of Graham's greatest contributions as a publisher has been the production of facsimiles illustrating in print and picture the life and struggles of the miners of the North Eastern coalfields. *The Compleat Collier* (1708) is the earliest study that he has reproduced. There is a magnificent series of drawings of the pits—T. Hare's *Sketches of the Coalmines of Northumberland and Durham* (1839), the *Pitman's Notebook* (1749) and T. J. Taylor's *Archaeology of the Coal Trade* (1856).

Amongst his plans for the future are a reprint of Bell's *Rhymes of the Northern Bards* (1820), one of the most important collections of local songs ever published, a Collection of broadsides and songs published during the great coalfield strikes of 1831 and 1834, a book (edited by Martha Vikunis) of North Country Social and Political broadsheets, a *Northumberland and Durham Industrial Miscellany,* and a reprint of Bewick's *History of British Birds.*

THE ENGINEERS' STRIKE IN THE NORTH EAST

One of the books most recently published by Frank Graham is a study of the great North-East Engineers' strike of 1871.[2] Though one feels at times a certain lack of sympathy with the striking workers, it contains a wealth of information and is a real contribution both to the history of strikes of the North East, and to knowledge of the struggle for a shorter working week.

The authors first present an introduction to industrial Tyneside, followed by a general description section on the history of movements to reduce the hours of labour before 1871. They recall, for instance, how the London bookbinders struck successfully in 1794 for a one-hour reduction in their working-day of 14 hours. And how, in the 1830's, the economist Nassau Senior formulated his "last hour theory", so attractive to employers, that the *whole* of the manufacturers' profit came from the last two hours that his factory worked.

The bulk of the book treats the preparation and events of the great strike which opened on June 1, 1871, and continued for about 20 weeks. The demand for the 9-hour day meant in fact a reduction of the working week from 59 to 54 hours. It involved some 7,500 engineers from a dozen firms, and was magnificently conducted by the Nine-Hour League under the leadership of Andrew Gourley and John Burnett.

One of the great lessons of the strike, a lesson that is so full of meaning for contemporary industrial struggles, was that this great *local* industrial struggle was won by the continuous and increasing spread of solidarity to every part of Britain with the result that popular opinion warmed to the strikers, and strike pay, dependent on this solidarity, actually continued to *increase* in the course of the strike.

When J. Charles Cox, himself an employer and county magistrate, wrote to the *Spectator* early in October, 1871, he stressed that his study of the accurate balance sheets of the Nine-Hour League strike fund showed that *weekly* contributions were coming from some fifty of the principal towns of Britain and from nearly every trade.

But the solidarity was also international. The Associated Employers, effectively led by Sir William Armstrong of Armstrongs (guns, warships, ammunition, machinery, millwork and cranes), were determined to break the strike by the employment of blacklegs not only from the unemployed of England and Scotland, but from Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Holland and Germany. Many of the foreign workers came to the North-East (offered higher wages than the striking workers had been receiving) totally unaware that they were expected to act as strike breakers.

And the trade union movement with the backing of the International Working Men's Association worked with much success to convince them to return home and also sent warning delegates to the towns from which they were imported. The authors have somewhat underestimated the role in this of the First International, but they quote the *Times* of September 11, 1871:

> "If Sir William Armstrong could have retained his Prussian and Danish labourers, he might have laughed at the strike; but Prussians, Danes and English have all succumbed to the pressure of working class opinion in the North or to the secret mandates of the International. . . . A few prosecutions of foreign workers for breach of contract have been attempted; but this method is scarcely likely to serve the masters in attracting or retaining foreign labour. The engineers on strike have given liberal assistance to the imported

[2] E. Allen; J. F. Clarke; N. McCord and D. J. Rowe—"*The North-East Engineers' Strikes: the Nine Hours' League,*" Frank Graham, £2.50.

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> labourers who desire to return home . . . they have in all probability succeded in cutting off the main sources of supply for the Tyneside works."

Such solidarity, national and international, ably promoted by the Nine-Hours League, and steadily developing an expanding moral and financial support, was a crucial factor in the eventual victory of the strike.

And it *was* a victory, however much the employers tried to disguise it at the time. Andrew Nobb of Armstrongs wrote to his colleague Stuart Rendel:

> "We have made the best of a bad job but you must not forget, my dear Stuart, that we pay a fearful price for it. The wages are practically raised 11.6% and this is very heavy."

PRISON IS THE PLACE FOR THE POOR

The authors of the *North-East Engineers Strike of* 1871 relate in their introductory chapter the story of earlier strikes in the area in the '30s and '40s, particularly those of the miners.

One of the great allies of the pitmen's struggles was the solicitor W. P. Roberts who earned the title of the "miners' attorney-general". In the legal actions which he argued on wage reductions, long hours, increasing fines, annual hiring (bonding), and worsening working conditions, he came to see very clearly the class nature of the law:

> "But the men and masters do not stand on a par. The utmost the men could do was to summon their masters for wages, where perhaps no jurisdiction could be found; but the masters could send the men to prison, however gross the fraud committed against them.
>
> "It was reserved for this country to give the rich man the powers of inflicting imprisonment whilst it did not give the same powers to the poor man."

During the 1871 Strike a lad of 17 was sentenced to 14 days imprisonment for throwing stones and shouting "The Commune—sink the damned blacklegs!". The presiding magistrate remarked:

> "To imagine that persons in this country could shout for the Commune, and obstruct their neighbour with impunity, was to imagine something much too preposterous to be tolerated."

One feels that men like Roberts and the progressive defenders of the North-East striking workers of one hundred or more years ago would have somehow felt at home in the recent trial of *Oz* and have found something familiar in the words of Judge Argyle awarding sentences:

> "In my view, clearly in this case, to give these three probation would be totally inappropriate. I can accept that they are all comparatively poor men, so that a fine is not appropriate either. It follows, therefore, that the sentence of the court must be a custodial one."

True indeed to the class traditions of British justice when property and privilege are involved! The rich, if sentenced they must be, can be awarded a fine, that they can well afford, but prison is the proper place for the poor.

ERRATA

The last few lines in the second para. in the left-hand column of Brian Pollitt's article printed in our last issue (p. 121) should have read:

". . . . the amount of grain we are producing for the market *is only one half* and the amount we are exporting . . . ." etc.

"SCOTTISH MARXIST"

Scottish Communists' New Journal
Issue No. 1 appearing in June

"Scottish Marxist" will play a unique part on the Scottish left, presenting Marxist analysis and writing on Scottish economy, institutions, political, social and cultural life.

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Marxism and the Political Organisation of the Workers

John Gollan

Text of the 1972 Marx Memorial Lecture organised by Marx Memorial Library and delivered on Sunday March 12th 1972.

The main aim of this lecture in the centenary year of the Hague Congress of the First International, is to evaluate the significance of that Congress in the evolution of the thought of Marx and Engels on the question of the political organisation of the working class.

In the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, Marx and Engels first worked out the programme of the proletariat destined by the conditions of capitalism to take control of society and transform it. They were supported by a few hundred Communists in Western Europe organised in the secret Communist League.

Marx played a leading role in creating the First International in 1864, whose whole history was a persistent struggle for working class political organisation. It was the age of expanding capitalism, and of the trade unions in many countries bringing masses of workers into action.

The Hague Congress of the International in September 1872 in the conditions then prevailing, was a triumph for all Marx and Engels worked for. It declared that the economic and political emancipation of the working class demanded the formation in all countries of a workers' political party independent of all the capitalist parties.

First, however, I would like to re-state the essential views of Marx and Engels on the historic role of the working class which led them to this idea.

Historic Role of the Working Class

They didn't, of course, start their political life with such an historic appreciation.

From his observation of the class struggle in Germany and elsewhere, Marx became aware of the inadequacy of Hegel's philosophy, then dominating the minds of German intellectuals, to explain economic and social contradictions. Engels, from his close observations of economic development in England and France, was pointing out the completely new role which the industrial working class was playing in society. Their meeting and subsequent collaboration quickly brought them an identity of views. This is seen in their writings between 1844 and 1848.

In the *Introduction to a Criticism of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law* (February 1844), Marx put the matter like this: The proletariat is referred to as a class which finds itself in bourgeois society, but is not of it, and which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating the whole of society. It arises only with the beginning of capitalist industrial development in which, and I pass this idea on to Roy Jenkins, poverty arises not from natural causes but is artificially created by that society.

> "When the proletariat desires the negation of private property", he wrote, "it is merely elevating to a general principle of society what it already embodies in itself as the negative product of society . . . just as philosophy makes the proletariat its material weapons, so the proletariat finds in philosophy its intellectual weapons."

This, the kernal of their main idea, is subsequently developed in *The Holy Family*, *The Conditions of the English Working Class*, in *The German Ideology* and in *The Poverty of Philosophy*.

In *The Holy Family* it is argued that private property is compelled to bring into existence its opposite, the proletariat. The proletariat is compelled to abolish itself and *its* opposite, private property.

> "When the proletariat is victorious, it by no means becomes the absolute side of society, for it is victorious only by abolishing itself and its opposite."

Engels in his *Conditions of the Working Class*, pinpointed the role of the trade unions to abolish competition amongst themselves by the workers, which, carried to its logical conclusion, could lead to the end of bourgeois rule. But union opposition still remains isolated and it is Chartism which unites them:

> "If the fight became general", Engels wrote, "this was scarcely by the intention of the working man: or, when it did happen intentionally, Chartism was at the bottom of it. But in Chartism it is the whole working class which arises against the bourgeoisie...."

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In the autumn of 1845, the argument is carried a step further forward (in *The German Ideology*) to the issue of political power and revolution.

Political Power Decisive

First in the general thought that "Every class which is struggling for mastery . . . must first conquer for itself political power." In capitalist society the challenging class is the proletariat and this fact is a decisive qualitative historical change. In all appropriations up till now a mass of individuals remained subservient to a single instrument of production, but in the case of proletarian appropriation a mass of instruments of production must be made subject to each individual and property to all.

> "The alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary" *The German Ideology* stated, "an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, a revolution.
>
> This revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew. . . . Thus they (the proletarians) find themselves directly opposed to the form in which hitherto the individuals of which society exists have given themselves collective expression, that is the State.
>
> In order, therefore, to assert themselves as individuals they must overthrow the State."

Now follows a further very important development of this central idea, in *The Poverty of Philosophy*. Capitalism transforms the mass of the people into workers and creates for them a common situation and common interests. This mass becomes a class against capital but not yet for itself. In the constant struggles this situation is transformed, the mass becomes united and constitutes itself as a class for itself:

> "The interests it defends are class interests. But the struggle of class against class is a political struggle. . . . For the oppressed class to be able to emancipate itself, it is necessary that the productive powers already acquired and the existing social relations should no longer be capable of existing side by side. Of all the instruments of production, the greatest productive power is the revolutionary class itself."

The argument is then continued, that the condition for the emancipation of the working class is the abolition of every class. So there will be no more political power properly so-called, since political power is the official expression of antagonism in civil society.

The whole matter is then summed up in the famous classic exposition of the *Communist Manifesto*:

> "Not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class—the proletarians . . . of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class. The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product. . . . If by chance they are revolutionary, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend, not their present but their future interests; they desert their own stand-point to place themselves at that of the proletariat. . . . The advance of industry, whose involuntary producer is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of modern industry, therefore, cuts from under the feet of the bourgeoisie the very foundation on which it produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable. . . .
>
> The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest by degrees all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state, i.e. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible. . . . If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class; if by means of a revolution it makes itself the ruling class, and as such sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with those conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class."

From this time onwards the role of the working class comes up again and again in the writings of Marx and Engels.

The Political Organisations of the Working Class

In the Inaugural Address to the International Working Men's Association, written by Marx in October 1864, he drew attention to the wider significance of the struggle of the British workers.

The battle for the 10 hour day (won in 1847) he saw as a great contest between the blind rules of supply and demand and social production controlled by social foresight—But he added:

> "the lords of land and the lords of capital will always use their political privileges for the defence and perpetuation of their economical monopolies. So far from promoting, they will continue to lay every possible impediment in the way of emancipation of labour. . . . To conquer political power has

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> therefore become the great duty of the working classes."

While the *Communist Manifesto* had been adopted by "a small handful of those who then constituted the vanguard of scientific socialism", Engels observed, "the Inaugural Address was adopted by working men of different countries", from trade unions and various political bodies all commanding a considerable following in other countries of Western Europe.

So far, Marx and Engels in their writings before the *Manifesto*, had dealt with the victory of the proletariat and class relations in general terms. The *Manifesto* made this more precise.

These ideas were repeated in the Address of the Central Committee of the Communist League in 1850.

In an agreement signed in the same year by Marx, Engels and Willich on behalf of the Communist League and by Julian Harney on behalf of the left-wing Chartists, and by a group of French followers of Blanqui, to form a World Society of Communist Revolutionaries, its aim was proclaimed to be "the overthrow of the privileged class to the dictatorship of the proletarians" until such time as Communism was founded.

The same theme was repeated in *Class Struggles in France* and about the further development of the bourgeois revolution into the proletarian revolution.

There followed many years in which the question of a revolution by the proletariat was not on the agenda for Marx and Engels because of the rapid expansion of capitalism on the Continent, as well as in England and because of the varied political elements grouped round the International, even a common political platform became a matter for the future.

Lessons of the Commune

But the Paris Commune of 1871 at once brought these questions to the fore again. It was the first demonstration in history of working class power and of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was a new phase even if the International had not initiated it and Marx had warned about premature uprising. However it may end, he said, "we have attained a new starting point and one of world wide historical significance."

From it Marx drew two lessons: to make the task "no longer as before to transfer the bureaucratic military machine from one hand to the other, but to smash it", and secondly, the indispensable necessity of a revolutionary working class party.

The steps towards this conclusion are important.

In 1848 there was no doubt as to how Marx and Engels saw the Communist League. They repeatedly called it their party. There have been some misunderstandings about the reference in the Communist Manifesto the full title of which is the *Manifesto of the Communist Party;* to their not forming "a separate party opposed to other working class parties."

But Marx and Engels clearly had not the slightest intention of voluntarily giving up their organisation, tiny though it was, especially as there were only the beginnings as yet of two other working class parties, in Britain and the US.

What they were saying in the *Manifesto* was that they intended to work with all other working class parties, always however fighting for proletarian internationalism and keeping in view the ultimate aim of the working class as a whole, whatever phases the class struggle went through. And in each phase, they said, they would invariably bring forward "the property question", i.e. the need for the workers to expropriate the bourgeoisie as a whole.

In 1850, with the revolutionary defeats in Europe, the widespread arrests of suspected Communists and the evident prospects of capitalism expanding in various countries, the secret Communist League—what Engels in 1885 called the international movement "in its first narrow form" had to be dissolved.

But by 1864, with the formation of the International Working Men's Association, the movement adopted "its second, infinitely wider form". At this stage of historical development the Association was composed of varied elements in the different countries, at different stages of development and representing different and often conflicting trends and theoretical outlooks.

The *Inaugural Address* just referred in general terms to the efforts being made in England, Germany, Italy and France for "the political reorganisation of the working men's party."

In Britain the fight around Parliamentary Reform led the General Council of the International, with Marx's inspiration, to take part in setting up the Reform League in February 1865, and thereby launching a vast political mass movement.

Marx wrote to Engels in May the same year:

> "If this rebirth of a political movement of the English working class ends successfully, then without any exaggeration, one can say that our Association has already done more for the European working class than could have been done in any other way."

A year later, on January 15, 1866, Marx wrote to Kugelmann:

> "We have succeeded in drawing into the movement the only really large workers' organisation—the English trade unions, who previously occupied themselves *solely* with questions of wages. With their help, there took place a few weeks ago a huge

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meeting organised by the English Association we set up to campaign for *universal suffrage* (half of the Central Committee of this Association consists of workmen—members of our General Council). At this meeting only workers spoke. You can judge that the result was significant from the fact that the *Times* on two days running discussed this meeting in its leading articles."

Advance of Movement

In spite of the great struggles of 1866-7, the wavering of the trade union leaders of the day, and the consequent disappointment of the masses in the actual results of the Reform Bill, prevented the Reform League from becoming the working class political party for which Marx had hoped.

In January in the same year two working class political organisations had been founded in Germany one led by Lassalle and the other, under Marx's influence, by Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht. The latter in 1859 became the German Social Democratic Party, based on working men's clubs and affiliated to the International—the first modern workers' political party.

In France in the middle sixties, trade unions had been legalised, and in their strikes on the eve of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, political demands, especially the demand for a Republic—were becoming prominent. There was also in France an active branch of the International, though composed of motley elements politically—followers of Blanqui and Proudhon as well as of Marx. The workers of Paris, mostly under the influence of the Blanquists, played a decisive part in the overthrow of the Empire after its defeat by the Prussians. (Sept. 1870).

The Paris Commune, as we pointed out, showed up clearly both the heroism and the constructive ability of the working class, and the fatal lack of political unity among its most active members. It was natural, therefore, that the question of political organisation should figure on the agenda of the restricted Conference of the International. This Conference had been proposed by Engels, and met in September 1871.

It had before it a resolution drawn up by Marx and Engels:

> "Against the collective power of the propertied classes, the working class cannot act as a class except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from and opposed to all old parties formed by the propertied classes; This constitution of the working class into a political party is indispensable in order to ensure the triumph of the social revolution and its ultimate end—the abolition of classes."
>
> (*Minutes*)

The Conference debates showed how timely this resolution was. Opposition was led by the anarchists (followers of Bakunin) who had considerable support in Italy, Spain and parts of Switzerland, where they had split the International.

The Anarchists

Their political attitude was summed up by the statement in the programme of their organisation, "International Alliance of Socialist Democracy"—"It aims above all at the political, economical and social equalisation of classes", and their belief that the proletariat had no special role to play in the revolution.

When they asked to be affiliated to the International in 1869, the General Council pointed out in a letter drafted by Marx:

> "The equalisation of classes, literally interpreted, means harmony between capital and labour so persistently preached by the bourgeois socialists. It is not the logically impossible equalisation of classes, but on the contrary, the abolition of classes, this true secret of the proletarian movement, which forms the great aim of the International Working Men's Association."

However, Marx continued, if the statement was a mere slip of the pen and the alliance was dissolved, there would be no objection to its local sections being transformed into sections of the International.

(see Minutes).

The Anarchists agreed to dissolve and thus gained entry. But in reality they turned their Alliance into a secret body which attacked the International from inside using various cover journals.

At the London Conference they came out into the open. Vaillant, a Communard, moved the resolution on political parties on behalf of the General Council. Various Anarchist delegates attacked this on the grounds that it meant parliamentary action which was a "waste of energy", the only political action they recognised was "direct revolutionary struggle", that is, armed insurrection. They were opposed strongly by a number of delegates.

Marx said both legal and illegal methods of struggle were necessary. Anarchist dogma left the proletariat ideologically and politically helpless in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

> "The Governments are hostile to us": he continued, "it is essential to resist them with every possible means at our disposal. Every workman elected to Parliament is a victory, but we have to elect real people" (like Bebel and Liebknecht, he said, who had opposed their government during the war and supported the Commune).

Engels also tore their arguments to shreds:

> "Revolution is the highest act of politics" Engels argued. "He who recognises this must strive for such methods, such political actions, as prepare the way

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> for revolution, educate the workers for revolution, and without which the workers on the day after the battle, will always be fooled. . . . The politics which should be practised are working class politics: the workers' party should be set up, not as the tail of this or that bourgeois party, but as an independent party with its own aim and its own policy."
> (*The London Conference of the First International—in Russian*) 1936.

The Conference adopted the resolution by 13 votes to 4. It also prohibited the formation of secret societies as sections of the International, and decided to set up a Federal Council for Britain (which Marx and Engels hoped once more would grow into a working class party). *Minutes*.

"Fictitious Splits"

Although the conference decisions were endorsed by big majorities in the International's various sections, the Anarchists continued their struggle more violently than before, denying the need for the proletariat to hold political power at all. They were warmly quoted by the *Times*, which called the resolution on political parties "coolly calculated audacity".

In response to this campaign, Marx and Engels wrote a crushing rejoinder which was endorsed by the General Council on March 5, 1872, and issued as a private circular to all sections, entitled *Fictitious Splits in the International*. This reaffirmed and reprinted the resolution on political action adopted at the London Conference and the resolution denouncing sectarian organisations in their various disguises.

The struggle went on, however; and in order to bring it to a conclusion, the General Council (June 11, 1872) decided to call the full Congress of the International in Holland in September.

Marx remarked, and there was general agreement with him, "there was no doubt but that the question of organisation would be the principal subject that would be brought before the Congress. The struggles that had taken place had sufficiently shown that."

In the discussion at the General Council on the proposed agenda, Valliant proposed to insert the London Conference resolution on political parties into the Rules of the International. The remarks on this recorded in the Minutes (July 23, 1872) are very significant:

They read . . .

> "*Vaillant:* It has produced a great sensation, and most of the success of the International of late is due to that resolution, hence the Council ought to reaffirm it and adopt it as one of the fundamental rules of the society.
>
> *Engels* seconds it—the same reasons that made us adopt it at the conference still exist, and we shall have to fight it out at the Congress.
>
> *Marx:* There is another view; we have two classes of enemies—the abstentionists, and they have attacked that resolution more than any other;—the working classes of England and America let the middle classes use them for political purposes. We must put an end to it by exposing it." (*Minutes*).

The Hague Congress—September 2-7, 1872

This was the largest and most representative Congress of the International, and in effect, its last. It was attended by 65 delegates holding credentials from 96 organisations in 15 countries. Marx and Engels took an active part in a Congress for the first and only time on this occasion.

Journalists came from many countries, drawing on their imaginations for stories since they were not admitted to the private sessions. The secret police of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia, France and Belgium, were well represented doing their best to discover the identity of the delegates and what they were saying.

The first five working sessions (September 1-4) were occupied with the question of credentials. The Anarchists were heavily defeated. Even at the 6th session (evening of September 4) the Congress proceedings were held up by the Anarchists. Involved here was the proposition to discuss first the powers of the General Council and the International's rules.

At the 7th session (September 5, morning) a commission of five, including one of the Anarchists, was appointed to report on the activities of the *Alliance of Socialist Democracy*. After a brief interval, the Congress at the 8th session, open to the public, at last got to the report of the General Council. It was read in English by Dr. Sexton, in French by Charles Longuet, in German by Marx, and in Dutch by Van den Abele.

The report, written by Marx, exposed the reactionary repression in all countries against the International, the support of the international working class for the Commune, and the constant expansion of the contacts and achievements of the International.

At the 9th session (September 5, evening) the debate on the powers of the General Council was opened. *Lafargue* said that the aims of the International required organising the working class separately from its enemies, the throne, the altar and capital. "If the General Council did not exist, we should have to set one up."

Guillaume (Swiss Anarchist) attacked the very idea of centralised authority. "We don't want any authority, and in the Jura Federation (set up in rivalry to the International) we don't have one."

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The General Council had led no strikes and built no barricades, he charged.

Sorge (USA) reminded Guillaume of the International's support of strikes in France, Britain and the USA. The International was not a general, but a general staff training cadres. The power of the General Council, said Marx, was not a physical power but a moral one, but internal discipline had to be strengthened and decisions observed. Sorge underlined this point: "Who but our enemies have any reason to feel suspicious of the powers of the General Council? Does it possess a bureaucracy? Does it command the services of an armed police whereby it can force obedience? Is not its authority purely moral?"

The debate continued on these lines, and at the 10th session (September 6, morning) the Congress discussed the rules clause by clause, which were adopted in all cases by a large majority.

Vital Decision

In the course of this, Engels, Marx and nine other members of the General Council proposed that the new General Council should have its Headquarters in New York. Marx had already proposed shifting it to Brussels in 1870. The main reason given by Engels was, "Moreover, party differences in London have reached such acuteness that it is becoming *essential* to change the headquarters of the General Council."
(The Hague Congress of the First International—in Russian).

This proposal was adopted.

At the 11th session (September 6, evening) which was open to the public, the Congress went on to discuss the proposed addition to the rules concerning political parties.

Repeating the main points of the London Conference resolution, *Vaillant* said, "The economic struggle should be inseparable from the political struggle. . . . The London Conference excellently realised the necessity of this article."

Heppner (German SDP) added: " So what does abstention from politics lead to? That we should with our hands in our pockets calmly watch the revolution break out in France? The opponents want to transform the fighting International into a petty-bourgeois party in dressing gown and slippers."

Guillaume (Swiss Anarchists) said: "We don't want to be mixed up in the present governmental systems, in parliamentarianism. We want to overthrow all governments. . . . We reject the conquest of political power in the State, and demand on the contrary, the complete destruction of the state as the expression of political authority."

Longuet said: "If the Paris workmen had been better organised as a political party, Jules Favre and Co. would never have been in the seat of government. The Commune fell for the want of a political organisation. For the political struggle the workers must organise a political party, otherwise nothing will remain of the International."

The discussion was terminated at the 12th session (September 7) by 29 votes to 5, with 8 abstentions. The 15th session expelled the Anarchist "Alliance of Socialist Democracy". The report declared in part, adding a mass of evidence:

> "Before us is a society which under the mask of the most extreme anarchism, directs its blows not against existing governments, but against those revolutionaries who do not accept its dogmas and guidance. . . . It insinuates its way into the ranks of the international organisaiton of the working class, and tries first to seize its leadership, and, when that plan fails, strives to disorganise it. . . . To achieve its end this society does not draw back from any means, and perfidy; lies, slanders, intimidation, attack from behind."
>
> (The Hague Congress—already quoted).

After the Congress closed, on September 8 most of the delegates went to Amsterdam to take part in a public meeting organised by the Dutch Council of the International. At this meeting Marx summed up what, in his view, were the three most important aspects of its decisions: (i) The proclamation of the

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importance for the proletariat to combine the economic struggle with the political; (ii) the strengthening of the organisation of the proletariat by the increased powers of the General Council; (iii) the transferring of the General Council to New York.

He laid special emphasis on the lessons of the Commune, which showed that the organisation of the proletariat and of international solidarity were essential for victory. Answering the adventurist tactics of the anarchists and their rejection of the workers' political struggle, Marx said that the aim of the struggle to win political power and create a classless society could be not reached by the same means in all countries. He spoke of the possibility of peaceful means in countries like Britain and the USA.

Thus the Hague Congress was the culmination of the work of the First International.

It established the victory of Marxism as the revolutionary ideology of the working class. It was an important step in the process of combining scientific Communism with the mass working class movement.

Many of the debates have a curiously modern ring for today, including those on leftism. Whatever claim the leftists have for their views, they can't attribute them to Marx and Marxism. In effect the Hague Congress was the last Congress of the International. It cleared the way for, and spread wide the ideas for the formation of independent parties of the working class.

What followed was stormy and difficult, but it is not my purpose to deal with it here.

Lenin developed these ideas in founding the Communist Parties. The socialist world is the living proof of their validity.

In the capitalist countries with mass Labour Parties, but still small Communist Parties, the great mass battles, the realisation that militancy is not enough and the growth of left unity, are tributes too to their validity.

For all this at this meeting on the Centenary of the Hague Congress, we salute Marx and Engels, not only as the theoreticians of working class politics, but the practical architects of independent working class political organisation.

The world wide political organisation of the working class is truly their handiwork.

Labour History

Frederick Engels and William Morris

Paul Meier

This article, which first appeared in the French Marxist journal La Pensée *in April 1971, is an extract from a book to be published soon by Editions Sociales, Paris, entitled "La Pensée Utopiqe de William Morris."*

None of the contemporary biographies of William Morris—those of Mackail, of Lady Burne-Jones, Bruce Glasier or of his own daughter—May—make any allusion whatsoever to any contact between him and Engels. Is this perhaps their way of preserving a certain image of the poet? It is possible that so far as the first three are concerned this silence was due to a relative ignorance arising from Morris's own extreme discretion with regard to it. Indeed, throughout the whole of the correspondence of William Morris available to us today, there is only one definite allusion to such contacts. This is contained in the letter to Scheu written on December 28, 1884, the day after the split in the SDF. But he wrote a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones on the same day, describing the same events but omitting to tell her about this meeting. If he told Scheu about it, it was because this information was necessary and because his Austrian friend, himself in contact with Engels, was undoubtedly aware of these contacts. What is astonishing is that he kept silent about it to Georgiana who was his confidante in everything. Was not this prudence on Morris's part strange? We do not think so. He was a member of the Executive Committee of the SDF in 1884 and if he was meeting Engels he could only do so without Hyndman's knowledge in order to organise the opposition to Hyndman in secret.

After the foundation of the Socialist League these reasons became less pressing but he became moulded by the habits he had inherited from the period of secrecy, habits which neither Morris nor Engels sought to modify in the slightest, Morris because he was anxious to preserve his independence, Engels because he did not want to provide Hyndman with grounds for accusing "the Marxist clique" or, "the

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Grand Lama of Regents Park Road"[1] of direct intervention in the affairs of British socialists.

This would explain the silence of Lady Burne-Jones and of his son-in-law—Mackail. As for Bruce Glasier, Morris never had any reasons for confiding in him. But May Morris's discretion is more inexplicable since she had always been involved in all her father's political activities. None of the critics or those who have engaged in exegesis have ever even mentioned this matter and Engels' name only appears for the first time in E. P. Thompson's perceptive book (*William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1955). All these however are merely scattered and partial pointers and the basic problem is not being examined as a whole.

Evidence of contemporaries is both rare and contradictory. That advanced by Edward Aveling in a brief passage in an article on Engels written the day after his death, is particularly deceptive. "William Morris, so far as I can remember, came once. His mediaevelism, Engels regarded with good humoured toleration".[2]

Why the Prudence?

Is this the same prudence and discretion once again? It is possible because Aveling played an important part in the preparation of the split and could not ignore the various secret discussions in which he had himself participated. Or was there some obscure connection between this reserve and the debt which the unscrupulous Aveling owed to Morris? It is impossible to say. However, the general tone of this article suggests a further explanation, one which becomes more plausible if one bears in mind that what Aveling is alluding to here are the famous Sunday evening gatherings at Engel's house. There is thus no contradiction between what he says and the more precise testimony of Eduard Bernstein:

> "William Morris, the distinguished poet and artist, the leader of the Socialist League which split off from the Social-Democratic Federation in 1884 used to visit Engels occasionally at the time of the split and Engels always spoke of him with respect but they never became intimate. The main reason was that Morris was the outstanding personality in his own circle.
>
> In addition he was not often free on Sunday evenings."[3]

Hardly a Sunday evening passed without a meeting being held at Kelmscott House, either under Morris's chairmanship or with him present, if he was not involved in some propaganda meeting.

Finally let us quote one last statement which is of great interest. George Wardle, one of Morris's closest intimates in the Firm—Morris & Company—wrote in 1898:

> "All he knew of Karl Marx was, it seems to me, derived from his contact with E. Aveling, and also perhaps with Engels whom I think, he met a number of times."[4]

What gives Wardle's statement indisputable value was the fact that he was manager of the Firm during the years when these interviews took place and was in daily contact with Morris. But rather than repeat what third persons have said it is preferable to note what those directly involved have written.

The first mention of Morris's name in Engels' correspondence occurs in February 1884. He knew him indirectly through Bax and the Avelings, and, passing severe judgment on *Justice*, the organ of the Democratic Federation, he had nothing but scorn for those responsible for this weekly. His severity was moderated with regard to the poet himself . . . "Morris is perfect within his own limits, but these are not very extensive."[5] Engels' attitude is still rather distant and disdainful the following month. Kautsky was rather worried that Morris might be furious at being treated as a sentimental Socialist by Engels. Including all the editions of *Justice* in the same disdain, Engels replied to Kautsky, "The Morris affair is of no importance. These fellows are sufficiently confused already."[6]

His prejudice began to abate as soon as Eleanor Marx reported to him—as she did to her sister Laura—that Morris had defended Paul Lafargue's initiatives against the underhand opposition of Hyndman in the SDF Council ("Morris . . . also spoke for us."), and that he had been present with her at Highgate Cemetery on the first anniversary of Marx's death.[7] Eleanor's admiration for the poet increased more and more, and after he had made a speech opening an exhibition of paintings in Whitechapel, she wrote about his "splendid speech" with

[1] H. M. Hyndman. *The Record of an Adventurous Life* p. 252.

[2] Edward Aveling: "Frederick Engels at Home", *The Labour Prophet*, September 1895.

[3] Eduard Bernstein: *My Years of Exile*: p. 206. Note the difference between the two statements. Bernstein, who was not at odds with Morris, spoke of not "good-humoured indulgence" but of "respect".

[4] G. Wardle to S. Cockerell, August 24, 1898. May Morris II: p. 606. May Morris contented herself with publishing this letter in the Appendix of her book but saw no reason for including this fact, revealed by Wardle, in the text itself.

[5] Engels to Laura Lafargue, Feb. 16, 1884 (*Engels-Lafargue Correspondence* I. p. 174) All references to this Correspondence are from the original French Edition issued by Editions Sociales.

[6] *Engels, Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky*, pp. 104-106 (March 12 and 24, 1884).

[7] Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, March 17, 1884.

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the greatest enthusiasm.[8] But Engels remained somewhat distrustful with regard to Morris, "the very wealthy art enthusiast, but not very talented politician,"[9] for he declared that Hyndman, by adding Morris's money to his own, was aiming to "buy up the whole (Socialist) movement."[10] He maintained the same attitude until October, declaring that he only had confidence in Bax and Aveling and a "very poor opinion" of the others.[11]

Morris got to know Engels between October 20 and November 8, 1884, for Engels wrote to Kautsky:

> "Aveling and Tussy[12] are coming at 5 o'clock and Morris is coming at 7 to have a big discussion with me."[13]

The SDF Crisis

It was not easy to get an introduction into the Engels household. So we may assume that this meeting was not the first. It was quickly followed by others. For Engels wrote to Laura Lafargue on November 23, saying "Morris was here the other evening, and was fascinated to see the old Nordic Edda on my table,"[14] which suggests a very relaxed atmosphere. Soon, however, their meetings began to be concerned with the crisis in the SDF which Engels felt to be very near, and the visciscitudes of which he was able to observe. It was at his instigation that the opponents of Hyndman ("We—the Cabal", wrote Morris)[15] foregathered at Aveling's house on December 18, and wrote to Scheu to return from Edinburgh to London to attend the next Council meeting of the SDF and to denounce Hyndman's lies and calumnies. The Council met on the 23rd., but due to lack of time, the discussion was not completed, and was only concluded on the 27th. The outcome was that Hyndman was in the minority and his opponents left the SDF resolved to establish a new group—the *Socialist League*—and a new journal—the *Commonweal*.

This decision had been taken some days previously at a meeting of Hyndman's opponents held at Engels' house. On December 31, Eleanor Marx wrote to her sister describing what had taken place, and saying:

> "Our majority was too small to enable us to get rid of the chauvinist faction; this is why, after having duly consulted Engels, we decided to leave and to form a new organisation which will be called the *Socialist League*. Bax wants us to publish a weekly paper, but Engels is absolutely opposed so we will probably content ourselves with a monthly journal."[16]

Engels saw Morris again on December 27 after this general meeting of the opposition, but immediately before the decisive meeting at which the split was to take place. Writing to Bernstein on the 29th., Engels outlined the origins of the split and told him of Morris's statements regarding the evidence which had come to light in Edinburgh concerning Hyndman's duplicity, and added: "Morris and Aveling were at my place before the session, and I was able to give them some further advice."[17] We have Morris's own account of this interview (and as we have said, this is the only document of its kind we possess).

> "Aveling summoned me to go up to Engels on Saturday on an important matter. I was uncomfortable rather, wondering what it was. Aveling told me it was about the *Commonweal*; that Engels thought that we should have no chance of carrying on a weekly and had better try a monthly, at first at any rate. Aveling seemed rather inclined to agree with us and to stick to the weekly. I saw Engels who said that we were weak in *political* knowledge and journalistic skill, and that we should find it very difficult to carry on a weekly paper really well without stuffing it with rubbish, and so on. I must confess that though I don't intend to give way to Engels, his advice is valuable; and on this point I am inclined to agree. . . . I do dread having to drop the weekly, whereas I am sure we could carry on a monthly. I am afraid you will be disappointed at this, and I want to have your opinion. . . . Again I repeat, we are safe with a monthly, even if our progress as an organisation be slow. With a weekly it would always be uncertain: let's try a monthly first."[18]

We agree with E. P. Thompson[19] that the tone in which Morris speaks of Engels ("although I have no intention of giving way to Engels") is purely a matter of diplomacy. It was a question of assuaging Scheu's disappointment, for Scheu who was always something of a "leftist", tended to rebel against the authority of Marx's great friend. In fact, however, Morris did "give way" and came round to Engels' commonsense view against the opinions of Aveling,

[8] "*To-day*" May 1884, p. 388.

[9] Engels to Kautsky, June 22, 1889. *Engels Briefwechsel*. p. 124.

[10] *Ibid*, July 19, 1884, p. 138.

[11] *Ibid*, October 20, 1884, p. 151.

[12] Tussy was Eleanor's pet name.

[13] *Ibid*, November 8, 1884.

[14] *Engels-Lafargue Correspondence* I. p. 244.

[15] Andreas Scheu *Letters*, December 18, 1884. Bottigelli Collection.

[16] Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue. December 31, 1884, Bottigelli Collection.

[17] Engels to Bernstein. December 29, 1884. *Labour Monthly*, October 1933.

[18] To Andreas Scheu. December 28, 1884, *Letters*. p. 225.

[19] Thompson, p. 414. Note 3.

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Bax, Scheu and probably against his own inclinations.[20]

Why the Split

In the same letter to Scheu, Morris wrote that the split had brought "ancient history" to an end and initiated "modern history". The decision to leave the SDF, although the opposition had gained a majority, aroused a certain amount of surprise. In February 1885, when Paul Lafargue received the first number of the *Commonweal*, he wrote to Engels saying that "Everyone here is most astonished at what the majority have done; our friends have left instead of showing the minority the door".[21] Engels however, explained to Laura why, after he had had a discussion with Morris, the latter had taken this decision ("As Morris told me"); the SDF had scarcely more than 300 members and as far as the districts outside London are concerned "All is deception and imagination",[22] and in the letter of December 29 to Bernstein already quoted, he repeated the same explanation which Morris had advanced.

Engels held the founders of the (Socialist) League in very high esteem although he expressed doubts about their political capacity. In the letter to Laura which has just been mentioned he wrote:

> "In the whole of England you could not find three men with so little experience of political organisation as Aveling, Bax and Morris, but they are sincere."

and he wrote in the same strain in the letter to Bernstein quoted above ". . . the only honest men amongst the intellectuals, but the most unpractical men you could find (two poets and one philosopher)". What, it seems to us, it is important to note is that at that time, those closest to Engels considered Morris as well as Bax and Aveling as belonging to the Marxist group. "Our friends" said Paul Lafargue and Eleanor Marx spoke of them as "our people".[23]

In the letter of December 31 already mentioned Eleanor wrote to her sister Laura:

> "The General[24] has promised to help us now that we are rid of the foul elements of the Federation. . . . We will have the Germans on our side (through Engels), that goes without saying, and we are also counting on the (French) Workers' Party".

She took charge of the international section of the *Commonweal* and, on Engels' behalf, she approached the socialists of Europe for support and printed their messages of solidarity in the second number.[25] Morris drafted a letter to Wilhelm Liebknecht signed by Aveling and himself asking him to write articles for the journal and telling him he could do so in German as "There will be no difficulty in translating them".[26] As the first number was being despatched, Eleanor asked J. L. Mahon to give Engels four copies for him to send to Liebknecht, Bebel, Sorge and Bernstein.[27] Morris was full of plans. Together with Bax he worked out a programme of socialist pamphlets and one of these was to be a pamphlet to be called "Cheap Goods"[28] to be written by Engels. It does not seem, however, that Engels wrote this.

Engels and "The Commonweal"

Engels, however, was to give his friends more impressive help than this. The second issue of

[20] He wrote to Scheu on January 4, 1885. "I intend as far as I can to turn it into a weekly if possible. (*Letters*, p. 229).

[21] Paul Lafargue to Frederick Engels, February 5, 1885. *Engels—Lafargue Correspondence*, I, p. 265.

[22] Engels to Laura Lafargue, January 1, 1885. *Werke* Vol. 36. pp. 266-67.

[23] Eleanor Marx to Laura Lafargue, April 12, 1885, Bottigelli Collection.

[24] The "General"—the name given to Engels by Marx's daughters.

[25] In the archives of the Socialist League now lodged at the Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, there is one of these letters written by Eleanor to Wilhelm Liebknecht, (G.47).

[26] Institute of Marxism/Leninism, Moscow 662-417. There is no date on this letter but from the text it would appear to have been written in January 1885.

[27] Eleanor Marx-Aveling to J. L. Mahon, February 3, 1885. Archives of the Socialist League at the Institute of Social History, Amsterdam, 2-206.

[28] Ibid. 119.

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Commonweal (March, 1885)[29] published his famous article—*England in 1845 and in 1885*—which was a remarkable analysis of the development of British capital in the period of prosperity which followed the decline of Chartism until the new period of economic crises; it was the loss of Britain's industrial monopoly which restored enthusiasm and direction to British socialism. E. P. Thompson observes correctly that in writing this article in the journal of the Socialist League, he was identifying himself with it at that time;[30] and, in passing, he also makes the curious remark that "Engels' style in places assumed certain features of Morris's thought and his use of the word 'civilisation' ".[31] This article made a profound impression on Morris and he repeated its arguments, quoting passages from it, by "the great socialist economist Frederick Engels" in the course of a meeting in July.[32] At a meeting at the end of March he already appeared to be completely pre-occupied with the problems it raised.[33] Two years later, in some personal notes in which he described the various stages of the movement, he again recalled, as a memorable event, the "admirable article by Engels which attracted much attention."[34] Engels' collaboration though not very great, was in fact, continued. In October 1885, *Commonweal* announced that "Next month . . . Frederick Engels will contribute an article on the second part of Marx's *Das Kapital*".[35] This was not quite true. The article which appeared in the November issue was a purely polemical one attacking a plagiaristic and faulty translation of *Capital* which had appeared in the review—*Today*.[36]

Thus throughout the whole of 1885 the relations between Morris and Engels remained excellent—and the latter's correspondence contained none of the unfavourable comments to which he was so inclined. In fact, there is no mention of Morris whatsoever. Did this mean that the two men did not meet again? No, we think that on the contrary, their collaboration became closer and the number of meetings between them increased greatly, and once they had clarified the immediate tactics to be followed, and the split had taken place, their conversations were able to advance to the ideological plane which enabled Morris to assimilate certain aspects of Marxist thought much more effectively than he had been able to do at the hands of the confused intermediary—Bax.

The absence of any mention of Morris in Engels' letters strengthens our view. It was rare for Engels to intervene other than to praise or to criticise some action in which those with whom he was speaking were involved, and if he maintained silence about Morris's visits, it was because these had become routine and were not concerned with any immediate action. Siegried Bünger, in his very detailed and documented study of Engels, considered that Morris's activities were marked by the influence of his discussions with Engels.[37] Unfortunately he has no more hard evidence than we have to substantiate this hypothesis. We have not abandoned hope that given the strange twists of research some unexpected document will come to light and provide the necessary confirmation. But is it really essential? Apart from the convincing indications which we can find in the works of Morris himself, is it really credible that the friendly meetings which we know to have taken place in 1884 were suddenly broken off in 1885, just at the time when there was a growing *rapport* between the two men?

A Socialist Gallery

In November 1885, Paul Lafargue told Engels that the *Socialiste* was proposing to publish "a gallery" of portraits of foreign socialists."[38] This was done in the journal from November 14, 1885 to August 28, 1886 and introduced successively Marx, Engels, Lavrov, Perovskaya, Morris, Bax, Aveling, Basly, Bebel and Liebknecht. As can be seen, Morris was considered by the Marxists to be one of their number. But things began to deteriorate in 1886. Engels felt that the English working class would soon begin to extricate itself from its torpor and he wanted the Socialist League to establish more direct contact with it and to break out of its narrow circle. Writing to Sorge in January, he again expressed this hope.

> "The whole movement here is now nothing more than one of appearances; but if we could succeed in developing a core of people in the Socialist League who understood the business theoretically, it would be of great help in starting the real mass movement which will not be held back much longer."[39]

[29] *Commonweal*, March, 1885. pp. 12-II, 12/I-II, 14/I.

[30] Thompson, p. 436.

[31] "New markets are getting scarcer everyday so that even the negroes of the Congo are now to be forced into the civilisation attendant on Manchester calicoes, Staffordshire pottery, and Birmingham hardware" (Thompson, 543, footnote 2).

[32] The *Depression of Trade* B.M. Add. MSS. 45. 333-4 (5).

[33] *Commercial War* ibid; May Morris II published a part of this (p. 311).

[34] *Notes on Propaganda*, ibid 46—345.

[35] *To our Readers: Commonweal*, October 1885 p. 88/2.

[36] Frederick Engels: How Not to Translate Marx: *Commonweal*, November 1885, pp. 97/1-2, 98/1.

[37] S. Bünger, *Friedrich Engels und die Britische Sozialistische Bewegung*, p. 84; Thompson, p. 435, is of the same opinion.

[38] Engels to Lafargue. November 4, 1885, *Engels-Lafargue Correspondence*, I, p. 317.

[39] Engels to Sorge, January 19, 1886. *Marx-Engels Correspondence*, published by F. A. Sorge, II. pp. 23-24.

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This letter would not be without interest if one could ask who are the people called upon to carry out this task of theoretical education.

Engels was much less optimistic two months later. He found that "our good Bax and Morris" were "torn apart with the desire to do something (if they only knew what?)" and "in addition they have more dealings with the Anarchists, than is perhaps desirable". They are, he concluded, "two babes in politics"[40]. Morris's anti-parliamentarian rigidity, which was soon to lead to an open conflict with the Avelings, in effect obliged him to look for support to the Anarchist wing of the League, although he did not join them. From the beginning of April onwards, this apparent collusion and the transformation of the *Commonweal* into a weekly marked the beginning of the rupture. He began to be critical of Morris "who, like a bull, charges at Parliamentarism with his head down." Bax and he "will have to learn by experience what kind of people their Anarchist friends are."[41] He believed that ". . . they are, at the moment, completely in their hands" and described Morris as a "sentimental Socialist."[42]

It should be noted that Engels never for one moment made the mistake of bracketing Morris with the Anarchists, but in his wrath he did, however, make a mistake in describing him as a sentimental socialist, an epithet which he frequently used. There can be no doubt that Morris himself was responsible for this judgment partly because of his excessive under-estimation of his own theoretical capacities, and, in addition, because of certain unfortunate statements which he made which were simply an expression of his modesty.[43] All who knew him more intimately than Engels did, agree on a contrary view of Morris. "He was anything but sentimental" wrote Walter Crane, who added "One could not make a bigger mistake that to think that William Morris was a sentimental soul who, having built an ivory tower of art and poetry, sighed over the troubles of this world and declared himself a socialist because factory chimneys invaded his vision."[44]

Halliday Sparling, his son-in-law, thought "there was no sentimentality in him and he could not abide it in others."[45] We could quote many other statements of the same kind. But Engels' strictures are nevertheless understandable. He was defending a definite and effective political line and Morris's temporary purism appeared to him to warrant being called unrealistic. We feel it right to add that in our view, Engels always displayed a rather impatient severity with, and a certain disdain for, the English Labour movement. The continuing *embourgeoisement* of the British working class irritated him and he compared the backwardness of Britain with the heights being reached by German social democracy to which he gave all his approval. R. Page Arnot could hardly refrain from expressing some irritation at this extreme severity.[46] Marx himself was not always free from the idiosyncrasy, jokingly referring to the English as "diese verdammte Schleswig-Holsteiner" (these dammed Schleswig-Holsteiners)[47] E. P. Thompson, however, discussing some of the conclusions formulated in his monumental study in a subsequent lecture, was of the opinion that Marx would have been more indulgent than Engels with regard to Morris and would have had a better appreciation of what was humanist in his personal contribution to the development of Marxism.[48] It should be added that Engels did not share Marx's fervent appreciation of poetry.

However, the bridges were never completely destroyed. We believe that this unique letter written by Morris to Engels, which we have discovered, belongs to that same year, 1886. It is simply dated April 9:

> "Dear Mr. Engels,
>
> You would do us a great service if you would write us a short article on any subject you please, and as short as you please (if you find that more convenient) for next month's *Commonweal*. I venture to ask this though I know how much your time is taken up and how serious your work is, as it is very important that we should have a weighty article to stand at the head of our paper next month. So I will beg you to forgive me for troubling you.
>
> Yours faithfully,
> WILLIAM MORRIS.[49]

[40] Engels to Paul Lafargue, March 20, 1886. *Engels-Lafargue Correspondence* Vol. I. pp. 349-350.

[41] Engels to Laura Lafargue, April 28, 1886. *Werke* Vol. 36, p. 474.

[42] Engels to Sorge. Vol. II. p. 38.

[43] Thus he wrote "I am a sentimentalist in all the affairs of life and I am proud of the title" (Address at the 12th Annual Meeting of the SPAB 1889; *May Morris* Vol. I. p. 147).

[44] Walter Crane "*William Morris to Whistler*" pp. 4 and 6.

[45] Halliday Sparling. *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris* p. 40.

[46] R. Page Arnot, *William Morris—The Man and the Myth*, p. 40.

[47] Engels to Laura Lafargue, March 14, 1892. Engels—Lafargue Correspondence, Vol. III, p. 168.

[48] E. P. Thompson, *The Communism of William Morris*, pp. 5-6.

[49] *Marx-Engels Archiv* 5070-142. IISG Amersterdam. This letter could not have been written in 1885 because the important article mentioned above appears in March of that year. It would have been very strange if Morris had asked Engels immediately after this, and without mentioning the article at all. It appears more likely that it was written the following year when personal contacts were less frequent and when Morris had no opportunity to ask Engels orally.

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Engels did not really have the time to write a "weighty article" but he wrote a note about the strikes in Decazeville, which he signed with his initials.[50]

The Anarchist Menace

Again in November of that same year there is a further note by him in reply to a question by a reader, in which he explains why he refused to allow any English translation of *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, to appear which had not been prepared under his direct control.[51] And with that his collaboration with *Commonweal* stopped, and it should be noted that it was finished with cold brevity. If he asked Paul Lafargue to send the journal an article in May 1886 about the Paris elections, it was for the purpose of being able to oppose irrefutable arguments to the insinuations published in *Justice*, but he did not hide the fact that "the League is in a state of complete confusion since it has allowed the anarchists to penetrate it."[52] He described the situation of the League to Bebel in the same terms in August—Morris was "the victim of the anarchists"; Bax is, theoretically speaking, still suffering from "infantile disorders", and Aveling, who had to earn his living "is not in the position to study much." Engels added that the latter is "the only one I see regularly", from which we can gather that he continued to see Morris and Bax from time to time.[53] This is borne out by a letter written by Engels to Laura in mid-September:

> "I have had several visits recently from Bax and one from Morris. . . . Morris is an inveterately sentimental socialist. It would be easy to control him if one saw him regularly twice a week, but who has the time? If one drops him for a month, he is sure to lose himself again. And would he be worth all that trouble even if one had the time?"[54]

In spite of the disdainful tone which had now become customary, it was clear that there was no fundamental disagreement between them except on the burning political question at that time, namely with regard to parliamentary action. Morris continued to remain intractable on this point, although his position became rather more flexible than has been generally said (but this would be the subject of a complete study in itself and is outside the framework of the present article). It would appear that this visit by Morris to Engels was his last, for in 1887, the crisis in the League became acute and reached its climax in the defeat of the "parliamentarians" at the Annual Conference, and their subsequent departure. Engels' letters to Sorge and to Laura Lafargue convey his weariness with the "socialist sects" and his interest in the effort being made by John Burns to bring about an independent union of the members belonging to the two associations which would leave Hyndman, Morris, Aveling and Co. "to settle all their quarrels by themselves."[55]

In spite of the sharpness of this conflict, there is no indication of any breach between Morris and the Marxist militants. Thus in April he translated, published and gave enthusiastic backing to an article by Paul Lafargue written in reply to a rather silly piece by Bax on "The Morrow of the Revolution." This is also confirmed by the fact that in December, Engels "personally" sent to Morris a copy of the American translation of his *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*.

Engels and Aveling

It is no less certain that one can note a real estrangement until 1889, but this was not due exclusively to the dissensions among the political groups. In 1887, Aveling's reputation sank to its lowest level. Innumerable accounts (which would take too much space to reproduce here), testify to the fact that his misdemeanours in connection with money and with women led him to be shunned by most of the active socialists. As opposed to this, Engels, in defiance of everyone, defended the husband of Marx's daughter, and displayed an obstinacy which one can only say bordered on blindness. His attitude in this matter had regrettable consequences and alienated him from sincere people who stopped visiting him in order not to meet Aveling.[56]

It was most likely that this was the case as far as Morris was concerned, although he was inclined to dismiss his personal antipathies in the name of unity and to be indulgent regarding the frailities of his comrades. We do not know what happened between him and Aveling apart from the fact that the latter borrowed fifty pounds from him.[57] Whatever it was,

[50] *The Commonweal*, May 15, 1886. p. 55/II.

[51] *Commonweal*, November 13, 1886. p. 262/I.

[52] Engels to Laura Lafargue, May 1886. *Engels-Lafargue Correspondence* I, p. 358.

[53] Engels to Bebel, August 18, 1886. *Werke* Vol. 36, p. 570.

[54] Engels to Laura Lafargue. September 13, 1886. *Engels-Lafargue Correspondence* I, p. 378.

[55] Engels to Laura Lafargue, May 21, 1887. *Correspondence* II. p. 41. See also his letters to her of April 26 (p. 34) and of June 7 (p. 44). See likewise Engel's letters to Sorge of April 23 (op.cit. p. 89) and of May 4 (p. 91) and June 10 (p. 97-98).

[56] "On account of Aveling, indeed, many people kept away from Engels' house". (Ed. Bernstein, "*My Years of Exile*" p. 202).

[57] After Morris's death, Sparling, his son-in-law, wrote to Aveling to try and recover the money, and Aveling replied on December 14, 1896 that he was not able to repay. He had made a similar refusal to Morris on August 27, 1895 (B. H. Add. Mss. 45 345 and 45 346).

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it was serious enough for Morris to call him a "disreputable dog"[58] (and we cannot find any other example of Morris's use of such an epithet).

Morris nevertheless remained in contact with the Marxist leaders. In March 1889, Laura Lafargue sent him an English translation she had made of the poems and songs of Eugene Pottier. Morris replied most warmly, and wrote that her translation was not only "excellent", but she had produced "good English verse", and asked for permission to publish them in *Commonweal.*[59]

In that same year, 1889, there took place in Paris the International Socialist Congress, from which the Second International emerged. A dissident Congress convened by Hyndman and the French Possiblists took place at the same time, and the former conference adopted a very definite political and theoretical position. Morris immediately agreed to participate in the first conference along with men like Bebel, Liebknecht, Bernstein and Lafargue. He was the leader of the British delegation, and took the floor to oppose the opportunist proposition to merge the two Congresses. Lafargue, chiefly responsible for the preparation of this great international revolutionary demonstration, had been in constant contact with Engels and had been in correspondence with Morris for months beforehand, and Morris published his communications in the *Commonweal.* It is outside the scope of this article to record the ups and downs which attended this historic event, beyond noting the position taken by Morris on that occasion and to that solely in order to emphasise that it testifies to his active belief in a definite ideology. It also marks a definite *rapprochement* with Engels. Lafargue's letters to Engels during the months of preparation suggest this very much . . . thus Lafargue writes:

> "Morris is full of enthusiasm for the Congress: you must keep him up to it and make use of *Commonweal*". And in June, "I will write to Morris . . . unless you would prefer to do so".[60]

Later documents are rare and we are quite ignorant about the relations which existed between Engels and Morris in the last years. We find them on the same platform at the May Day Demonstration in 1891 and 1892,[61] and E. P. Thompson sees this as symptomatic of the direction taken by Morris in "his last years of work for the cause".

The first English edition of Engels' *Conditions of the English Working Class* was published in that same year, 1892, and included as its preface the famous article which had made such an impression on Morris, as well as recalling explicitly that it had appeared in the *Commonweal* on March 1, 1885. Finally, in 1894, Engels read the theoretical manual written by Bax and Morris entitled *Socialism—Its Growth and Outcome.* He felt this book was a complete break with the "shoddy stuff" published by Swan Sonnenschein,[62] and he thought it so good that he sent a copy to Sorge. [63] Certainly he must have felt that the time he had formerly spent on meetings with Morris had not been in vain.

(Translated by Jack Cohen)

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[58] In a letter to Dr. John Glasse, September 23, 1887, R. P. Arnot, *William Morris. The Man and the Myth.* p. 86

[59] To Laura Lafargue March 25, 1889. Botigelli Collection. These poems appeared in *Commonweal* on April 13, July 27, September 21, October 17, December 28, 1889, and on April 12, 1890. Laura expressed her satisfaction to Engels regarding this publication in a letter on November 1889 (*Engels-Larfafgue Correspondence* II. pp. 362-3).

[60] P. Lafargue to F. Engels, May 26 and June 2, 1889. *Ibid* II pp. 274 and 297.

[61] See Thompson, p. 675. Engels to Laura Lafargue, May 3, 1892—(*Engels Lafargue Correspondence*) III, p. 179. Werke, Vol. 39, p. 217.

[62] Engels to August Momberger, March 9, 1894. *W.* Vol. 39, p. 217.

[63] Engels to Sorge, March 21, 1894. *Marx-Engels Correspondence*, published by F.A.S.

(Concluded from page 160)

political say-so from Westminster may be seen as a step backwards from the belated achievements of the Chartists. One more US nail in the UK industrial coffin may be lamented as yet another attack upon the trade unions. There is no space here to elaborate a reply to such a position other than to make the point that such arguments lead *inevitably* and *directly* to reformist conclusions and the false-consciousness which they engender. It will be a tragedy for the British Left if the *Morning Star* should find a bedfellow in the *Daily Express.*

We must all now face up to the ideological challenge of our time. The last time such a challenge faced British Marxists (in the 1880's & 1890's) the result was failure. The consequences, the "double-price", included two world wars and reformist, Fabian domination over our labour movement. To fail this time will have dire consequences indeed.

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Contemporary Capitalism and Revolutionary Change

Vic Allen *(Reader in Industrial Relations, Leeds University)*

An examination of revolution in contemporary capitalist countries hinges in the first instance on the meaning attached to the term contemporary capitalism. Firstly the claim which is often made that capitalist countries have not experienced revolution can only be made if the capitalist system is seen as a limited one containing only what can be described as the metropolitan capitalist countries in Western Europe and the USA. The capitalist system, however, is more all-embracing than that. Every metropolitan country in it has its satellites. The satellites, euphemistically called "developing countries" are as much and as essential a part of the capitalist system as are the metropolitan centres. The satellites in Asia, Africa and Latin America possess characteristics which are non-capitalist in origin. They are culturally mixed and they possess economic forms which are feudal or tribal and subsistence in character. But their dynamism stems primarily from the effects of the contradictions in the metropolitan countries. The forces which produce revolutions then are roughly the same as those which can or should produce them in the metropolitan countries. The question should really be why have there been revolutions in some countries within the capitalist system and not in others. Why in Cuba and not in the USA?

Contemporary capitalism may also mean different things depending on how classical capitalism is defined. Often, without offering a definition, Western social scientists acknowledge that what existed in nineteenth century Western Europe and the USA was capitalism. It was a polarised situation with sharp, apparent distinctions between the classes; it possessed obvious poverty and conspicuous consumption; it was characterised by relatively small scale production in competitive markets. This situation has obviously changed and the changes are used as criteria for concluding that capitalism has so changed its form, certainly since Marx wrote, that it should strictly be called something else. This conclusion enables the analysts to say that factors which could produce revolutionary change were present in the capitalist societies of Marx's time but are no longer present. The class structure is complex and fluid; obvious poverty has been removed and material distinctions have been blurred; production is large-scale, highly bureaucratised, controlled by managers; governments are concerned about welfare and are equipped with devices to maximise it.

Capitalism, however, is not a collection of *ad hoc* characteristics, but a clearly defineable system. It is a system in which the means of production are privately owned and are utilised through the market mechanism. Arising out of these factors the main characteristic is the division between the owners of the means of production and the non-owners whose only means of subsistence is by the sale of their labour power. Where the primary factors and its derived characteristics remain unaltered then no matter what other changes occur the system stays basically the same. The countries of Western Europe and the USA are, by this criterion, still capitalist ones, dominated by the prime contradiction between the social relations to the means of production and the forces of production. This situation can only be altered by a change in the social relations to the means of production; that is by the abolition of private ownership.

No Qualitative Change

Essentially, then, the situation in capitalist countries is as it was during Marx's lifetime. If qualitative changes had occurred they would not be capitalist countries; revolutions would have occurred and there would have been no discussion of this kind. But, of course, because these countries are subject to perpetual pressures from contradictions, they have undergone change. The prime contradiction has produced a succession of crises which have produced in the first instance a growth in the degree of monopoly and in the second instance an increasing intervention by the state to support the system of capitalism. The inability of the market mechanism to operate through the strain of the crises has brought states to legislate in its support. In Britain the most important sign of this is the attempt to impose a consensus through the Industrial Relations Act. In all the metropolitan capitalist countries recent changes have brought them nearer to the Corporate State stages of capitalism which leads to fascism and is the prelude to the ultimate crisis.

The point to note about capitalist countries is that no expediency, whether it be imperialism, neo-

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colonialism or fascism, can prevent their ultimate transformation. To deny this, to imply a quality of permanence, of immutability to capitalism is to be dogmatically unscientific in the approach to social behaviour. It is a rudimentary scientific precaution to admit the possibility of qualitative transformations resulting even from continuous addition. However, assertions about the inevitability of revolutionary change must be put into the context of empirical evidence. There have as yet been no revolutions in metropolitan capitalist countries. Perhaps the analysis which predicts their inevitability is in some way defective. In any event it is neccessary to examine more carefully the analytical approaches to revolutionary change.

The dominant paradigm in metropolitan capitalist countries for the understanding of revolutionary change is systems analysis. Social scientists use various models within this paradigm but all converge, eventually in the practice of empiricism. This means that every situation is examined for its own particular, peculiar qualities. The explanations which follow are particularistic. It does not matter that different situations may show different characteristics or that new characteristics may emerge. The definition of situation is important here. Within the framework of systems analysis it is legitimate to isolate any segment of social activity for examination. What is a system is left to the investigator to decide for there are no *a priori* guide lines for him. This means that it is possible to look at, say, the issue of student protest as a phenomenon with its origin in particular universities. The university or even department of a university where protest takes place may be defined as the system. There is no logical necessity for an empiricist to consider the structure of higher education or the social context of higher education as possible causal factors. It follows that revolutionary changes may never be identified by empiricists for each movement for social change can be so isolated and confined in terms of its causes and implications that its general relevance is not recognised.

There is no confusion amongst empiricists about what constitutes revolutionary change; about the mechanism for change; about impulses and media. Empiricism can accommodate any number of different accounts. Student protests, Black revolts and strikes can be attributed to irresponsible leadership, defective communications, bad working or living conditions, psychological disorders or any of a number of other factors. Nor is there any confusion among empiricists about the timing of revolutionary change. They cannot anticipate such a change because systems analysis is static and does not, therefore, permit the possibility of qualitative changes. Empiricists are essentially concerned with the identification, classification and description of revolutions once they have occurred. Their analyses support the *status quo* and are heuristically unimportant.

Alternative Marxist Approach

The alternative conceptual approach is Marxism by which is meant dialectical materialism. This is based on a dynamic conception of reality and, therefore can show revolutionary change in all of its stages. By enabling the necessary and sufficient conditions to be identified, it opens up questions concerning the identity of the conditions, the relationship between them, the mechanism for change and its timing. In contrast to systems analysis, dialectical materialism stipulates both the order of priority to be given to causal factors and the manner in which they operate. This paradigm has to be applied to concrete situations and the identity of the factors can only be obtained through empirical research. There is much less scope in this case for the exercise of intuition, for arbitrary judgements and for guesswork than is the case with systems analysis. The necessary conditions for change, once stipulated, are given for the social analyst. All that remains is for the sufficient conditions to be identified and even here the analyst is given guidance.

Dialectical materialism enables the broad outlines of the process of revolutionary change to be identified. This was done first by Karl Marx and elaborated by Lenin. Marx identified the source of change as the contradiction between the forces of production and social relations to the means of production. The prime relationship in a capitalist society, that between the buyers and sellers of labour power, was that through which the contradiction would work itself out by worsening the conditions of the sellers of labour power, the non-owners of the means of production, and transforming them from constituting a class of itself into a class for itself. This transformation would come about from the spread of class consciousness. A class of employees fully conscious of its objective economic position would revolt and acquire the ownership of the means of production for the state and thus destroy the prime relationship which characterises a capitalist society. The class of employees, usually described as the working class, is the medium through which change is achieved.

The application of this paradigm to concrete situations has raised questions about the timing of revolutionary change, the role of the working class and the kind of conditions which would give rise to revolutionary action. The questions stem in the first instance from an impatience for change which has distorted the historical perspective of the analysts. The qualitative transformation of pre-capitalist societies can be analysed dispassionately, using time mainly as a dimension for comparative purposes.

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But the rate of change in a contemporary society cannot be viewed in quite the same way. It is difficult for the analyst of contemporary capitalist society to take an historical view of change. He is continually looking for signs and is apt to identify elements which may appear relevant in the short-run but which have no long-run significance. The more committed the analyst is to changing the capitalist system then the more likely he is to allow his perspective to be distorted and to engage in theoretical improvisations.

Three Factors

Three factors in contemporary reality have tended to lead some analysts to modify the orthodox Marxist explanation of revolutionary change. The first is the apparently inert nature of the working class; the second is the rise of student protest movements while the third is the change in the composition of the working class.

Evidence of revolutionary inertia by the working class consists of two types. There is the strictly empirical evidence that so far there has not been a successful revolution involving an established working class. Put another way, no metropolitan capitalist society has yet experienced revolutionary change while satellites with relatively small, migratory labour forces have done so. There does not appear, moreover, to be much indication of revolutionary intent among established working classes. The second type of evidence consists of an explanation of the absence of revolutionary intent but it has been accorded an independent identity by being seen not simply as a reason why established working classes have not revolted but why they cannot ever revolt. Working classes are seen to be influenced by a socialisation process to accept the values of capitalism and work within its framework and, in any event, are inhibited from taking action by the process of bureaucratisation.

Different analysts have given priority to one or other of these processes. Herbert Marcuse, for example, sees socialisation as the main obstacle to revolutionary action by the working class. His book *One Dimensional Man* explains in detail how this process works. "One-dimensional thought," he stated, "is systematically promoted by the makers of politics and their purveyors of mass information. Their universe of discourse is populated by self-validating hypotheses which, incessantly and monopolistically repeated, become hypnotic definitions or dictations. . . ."[1] This discourse validates what exists; it serves as a justification of the *status quo* and treats non-operational ideas as non-behavioural and subversive. Such was the power to limit critical thought and hence action that Marcuse saw it as a brake on the resolution of contradictions. "Contradictions", he added, "do not explode by themselves."[2] He became disillusioned with dialectical theory. He stated that "Dialectical theory is not refuted, but it cannot offer the remedy. . . . It defines the historical possibilities, even necessities; but their realisation can only be in the practice which responds to the theory, and at present, the practice gives no such response.[3]

Herbert Marcuse recognised that practice was inhibited by the bureaucratisation of working class organisations as well as by socialisation. So did Ernest Mandel, but he emphasised the potency of bureaucratisation. He stated that "the traditional organisations of the workers movement are profoundly bureaucratised and long since co-opted into bourgeois society. . . ."[4] He dismisses them as possible vehicles of change. The working class can, Mandel believes, take part in revolutionary struggles by rising spontaneously, creating its own leadership and committees but only if it erects "multiple barriers against the penetration of bourgeois ideology into the working class. . . ."[5] If these barriers are not erected then Mandel shares in the gloom of Marcuse about the dialectical process.

Both Marcuse and Mandel recognised that revolutionary change had to take place through the working class but believed that this class was incapable of initiating change. In order to recover their optimism, to satisfy their commitment to revolutionary change, they had to search for catalysts or detonators outside of the working class. The student protest movements provided the answer. Ernest Mandel wrote that the student "can and . . . must play a powerful role as detonator. By playing this role within the working class, above all through the intermediary of the young workers, they can free in the working class itself enormous forces challenging capitalist society and the bourgeois State".[6] This detonator-explosive theory is also accepted by Marcuse who became the great apostle of student protest.

Dialectical Basis Rejected

The modifications which Marcuse and Mandel have introduced into the orthodox dialectical materialist explanation of revolutionary change are profound and amount to a virtual rejection of its dialectical basis. Looking at something dialectically means regarding it as something which is emerging, is incomplete and is in the process of change. It

[1] p. 14.

[2] ibid, p. 253.

[3] ibid.

[4] "The New Vanguard," in *The New Revolutionaries*, edited by Tariq Ali, p. 50.

[5] ibid.

[6] ibid, p. 52.

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involves recognising that change occurs through contradictions between related determinants of behaviour in all and every sphere of social activity and that each contradiction in the process of its resolution creates repercussion effects which produce further contradictions. Thus change is continuous and inexorable.

The notion that anything can be exempt from the pressures of contradictions, that anything can exist without being an element in a contradiction and possessing its own, is inconsistent with dialectical theory. According to dialectical materialism there can be no distinction between detonator and explosive. An analysis which makes such a distinction assumes that the explosive is static until it is detonated; in other words that the explosive is insulated from all but special pressures which have detonating qualities. It gives no guidance about the identity of the detonator which is left either to speculation or empirical experience. Whether or not a protest possesses the qualities of a detonator is left for the analyst to decide.

There is fairly wide support for the view that during the May/June 1968 events in France the students' protests acted as a catalyst for a wider protest movement. There is much less support for the view that students' protests in general have catalyst qualities for, even if students protest as they do in the USA, Japan and Federal Germany, there is no generally accepted causal link between their action and that of the working class. It is open, therefore, for analysts to say that this or that student movement can act as a catalyst or that Black protest in the USA or any other alienated minority may do so. This modification is plain empiricism. The assumption that the working class cannot detonate itself, no matter how sociologically erudite is its explanation, is inconsistent with Marxism but is consistent with the use of systems analysis. Thus the modifications of Herbert Marcuse in particular have converted a Marxist explanation into a conventional empiricist one.

It is not enough, however, just to damn Marcuse with the taint of empiricism. The conception of the working class as an inert phenomenon or as one that is contained by socialising pressures is plainly contrary to empirical reality. The most that might be said is that the working classes in metropolitan capitalist countries have not yet conceived of themselves as belonging to a class, as constituting a class for itself—that the final transition to class consciousness has not been made. But even this is dubious as an explanation of why the working classes in metropolitan countries have not engaged in revolutions.

Working classes do not *make* revolutions; they form an integral part of revolutionary situations but are not the whole situation. They do not start revolutions but act in response to a complex combination of factors. If they appear to be inert it is because the contradictions, primary, secondary and internal, have not so disrupted their total situation that revolutionary action of some sort is inevitable. In the face of such disruption involving divisions in the ranks of the ruling class, disaffection in the armed forces and the police, socialising pressures count for nothing for they become inconsistent with a reality which cannot be ignored. It is straight Parsonian functionalising to believe that indoctrinating pressures, or the constant application of the dominant values of the capitalist system, can determine behaviour irrespective of the reality of concrete situations. In any case, it just does not happen.

The crucial point here is that though a revolutionary situation may be reached, the manner of its resolution is not predetermined and will depend upon the political direction given to the working class and the manner in which consciousness is developed during the course of the revolution. The emergence of a widespread class consciousness is unlikely to be a developing phenomenon unless the crisis situation itself is of the kind which is drawn out. A working class can become conscious of the need for a basic alteration in the political system almost overnight if the severity of the crisis is great and provided there exists organised means to give political direction. It is important, therefore, to examine the dynamics of the whole system rather than to concentrate on the working class alone in order to understand the process of revolutionary change.

Composition of Working Class

Nothing that has been said so far is intended to belittle or underestimate the part the working class plays in revolutionary change. It plays the major part. The prime contradiction in capitalist societies works itself out initially at the point of production. The contradiction is about economic forces but these work through people depending on their class position. The class for change is the working class, not by choice or political decision but through the nature of the prime contradiction. The working class must, by definition, be the vehicle for revolutionary change. It is pertinent, therefore, to look at the composition of the working class for evidence about its responses. This has been highlighted by some commentators, Serge Mallett and Norman Birnbaum in particular.

Birnbaum, for example, believes "newer forms of class conflict" may have emerged and that the development of a "new middle class or technical intelligentsia" may have some bearing on this.[7] Birnbaum states that: "The growing complexity of

[7] "The Crisis in Marxist Sociology" by Norman Birnbaum, is *Social Research*, Vol. 35, 1963, pp. 356-7.

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the production process, the increasing embeddedness of the state in society, the development of large systems of administration, distribution and services, have resulted in the growth of a new labour force, characterised by educational qualifications, organisation in bureaucratic hierarchies and a somewhat labile political disposition. . . ." Serge Mallet has written in a similar vein about "the new working class".[8]

The existence of a changing labour force composition cannot be denied. It can be shown statistically that the proportion of workers engaged in point of production activities is declining and that the proportion engaged in administration, services, and technical work is increasing. These changes are common to all metropolitan capitalist countries. It is undialectical, however, to treat these changes as new phenomena and to talk, in consequence, of a "new working class".

The labour forces in capitalist countries have always changed their composition. The decline of agriculture in absolute terms and in relation to manufacture had a profound effect on the nature of industrial labour forces. It produced a labour force which was both concentrated in factories and urbanised. Was this any the less important than the rise of service industries at a later stage? The operation of the free market mechanism continually moulds labour forces to meet its own changing requirements. The forces of production alter the labour/capital ratio in favour of capital and have created an unbroken trend towards mechanisation. The process is one of the dilution of old skills and the creation of new ones.

Birnbaum and Mallet are concerned with the emergence of technicians, and administrators who, in Birnbaum's words, "Expropriated from control of administration . . . nonetheless possess the skills without which administration (in a large sense of the term) would be impossible. . . ." But this process has been visibly going on at variable rates since about 1900. And in any case, is it more significant than the dilution of apprentice-skilled work between say 1850 and 1900? In that process the educated elite of the labour force was displaced by the relatively uneducated with low skills. The constant struggle for markets has increased the degree of monopoly. This has accentuated the growth of administration and the tendency to concentrate on selling rather than producing. The emergence of administrators and salesmen is not new, nor, of course, is their organisation in bureaucratic hierarchies. Was not Max Weber deeply concerned about this very phenomenon before the first world war?

Labour forces are perpetually changing their composition and, therefore, at any one time they are always new. The question is then, does the present composition have any more consequence for class conflict than previous compositions? In this connection the first point to remember is that the conflict we are concerned with is a structural not a superstructural phenomenon. It results from the social relations to the means of production. Superstructural phenomena may react back on it but they cannot alter the quality of conflict: they cannot *permanently* alter its intensity or effect the removal of conflict. We know that people in the same objective economic position will tend to produce common responses to similar pressures. All employees are in the same objective economic position and, irrespective of their social backgrounds, their educational standards, their income levels, their skills and their authority positions, they respond by forming trade unions and engaging in forms of industrial action. These responses are partial ones determined by an occupational, industrial or group consciousness. There is no useful evidence at hand to show that one labour force composition rather than another will prevent the emergence of a common class consciousness when the pressures from the objective economic position become sufficiently intense. Lastly, it has to be remembered that the absence of a revolutionary intent amongst metropolitan working classes is neither new nor peculiar to their present composition. Moreover, the tardiness in the development of class consciousness was as marked before the emergence of sophisticated methods of socialisation as it is at the present.

Other factors

The analysis of revolutionary change should not proceed in an *ad hoc*, intuitive manner. There is no doubt that the apparent inertia of working classes, the rise of protest movements apart from the working class and the changed composition of the working class are relevant factors for an understanding working class consciousness. Other factors of relevant interest could be added, such as the relationship between industrial and political action, the role of trade unions and the significance of an unstructured shop steward's movement. Indeed many issues in capitalism as a whole could be highlighted as significant for an understanding of revolutionary change.

Dialectical materialism provides a range of logically consistent methodological tools for the analyst. It emphasises the totality of situations so that the analysis must proceed from the whole to its parts. This means that the analysis should start from the prime contradiction, through each of the economic classes to which the social relations to the means of production under capitalism gives rise, to the point where consciousness results in political

[8] "The New Working Class", *International Socialist Journal*, No. 8, April, 1965.

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behaviour. The causes of behaviour lie in the total and not its parts, so that each factor which is examined must be seen in its environmental context. Nothing can be isolated and insulated from external causal factors.

Secondly, the approach stipulates that each and every social phenomenon contains the mechanism for its own transformation. Nothing is immutable, static or inert. The working class and capitalist classes are dynamic phenomena with changing forms and relationships. They are subjected to pressures from contradictions which must inevitably transform their relationship and thus alter the social relations to the means of production. The contradictions are both external and internal to them. The internal ones act contrary to the resolution of the prime one. For example, the prime one is a class for itself creating factor while internal ones can be divisive and destructive of unity. Internal contradictions are derived ones and can never transcend the prime one though they may seem to be dominant. The complex of contradictions is in no sense metaphysical. Contradictions are empirically verifiable phenomena which reveal the precise relationships between significant variables.

Thirdly, the analysis is historical. This follows from the use of the dialectic which is a specific historical approach. Being historical means not only examining the historical development of capitalism but also viewing the present and future as stages in that development. It also means resisting making impatient theoretical improvisations.

Lastly, while the dialectic provides the analyst with the mechanism for change, materialism reveals its source and the causal priority to be given to the array of variables in any situation. There should be no confusion here about the relationship between economic and sociological factors. The first questions should always be what are the economic variables and what are their significance.

The Context

Given these analytical tools what can be said about the transformation of contemporary capitalism? Firstly, its context. Capitalism is a universal system but not the universe. It no longer dominates its environment as it did at the time of Marx. It constitutes a decreasing part of an environment which it shares with socialist countries. Capitalism, therefore, is perpetually confronted by examples of its transformation. The resolution of the prime contradiction is no longer an analytical category, a propaganda issue or a fiction. It constitutes part of social reality. This is a factor which must be taken into account, for, insofar as men can influence events, capitalists will take it into theirs.

The significance of a socialist alternative is seen most clearly in the relations between the metropolitan and satellite capitalist countries. The main contradiction here arises out of the fact that the prosperity of the former depends upon the exploitation of the latter. The satellite countries have both economic and social problems on the one hand and material aspirations on the other which cannot be resolved or achieved so long as their positions of subordination are maintained. This is confirmed both by historical experience and analysis. There are no examples of a transition from satellite to metropolitan status within the capitalist system. There is a permanent possibility, therefore, of satellite countries attempting to resolve their problems by the emulation of the socialist example. For the attempts to be successful they have to coincide with the resolution of the prime contradiction within the countries concerned. Mostly this coincidence does not occur. Nonetheless all attempts are seen by metropolitan countries as threats to their power and prosperity. This has led to armed intervention to prevent the attempts being made.

The same contradiction has led satellite countries to exploit the dependence of metropolitan countries on them but strictly within the system. For example, the Middle-Eastern and African oil producing countries, led by Libya, are successfully pushing up their share of revenues from oil. This has repercussions in the metropolitan countries, for the standard of living of their inhabitants and, therefore, intensifies the struggles there. The ability of capitalist satellites to look to socialist countries for support has weakened the power of the metropolitan capitalist countries to use unequivocal armed intervention as a means of control and, in consequence, has altered the character of imperialism and neo-colonialism as final stages in the development of capitalism. Imperialism and neo-colonialism are no longer the final solutions to the problem of capitalism. This, of course, was so for capitalist countries in the inter-war years which did not share in the control of satellites.

Metropolitan capitalist countries have been forced to look for internal solutions for their problems of production and distribution. These are of two kinds. Firstly there is the re-emergence of corporate states involving legally imposed consensuses and devices for its legitimation in order to control class conflict. All of the metropolitan capitalist countries possess elements of corporate state apparatus and are moving towards one form or other of fascism which seems at the present to be the final stage of capitalism. Because of the dialectical nature of social phenomena, however, it is not possible to talk categorically about final stages. The second type of solution is internal to metropolitan countries and involves collusion such as in the European Economic Community. This will and does reinforce movements towards oppressive internal solutions.

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An inevitable consequence of the resolution of the prime contradiction in capitalist societies is the growth in the degree of monopoly. This has become an institutionalised universal phenomenon through the development of international and multi-national firms. These firms have to be seen first in market then in power terms. They act as legitimate means of control in capitalist satellites where gun-boat diplomacy has become illegitimate. Their emergence, therefore, has assisted in perpetuating the system.

Wider Contradictions

Inside separate capitalist countries the movement towards qualitative structural change must be examined within the context of the wider contradictions of capitalism. These contradictions intensify class conflict and, thereby, heighten consciousness. But they also produce internal contradictions which are divisive within classes. Capitalists are divided as their interests compete—small businessmen range against monopolists, financiers against manufacturers, farmers against industrialists and so on. These divisions need to be examined empirically in order to understand the extent to which the process of transformation is proceeding. The working classes are also divided, often along the same lines as their employers. With workers, however, there are additional and more pervasive divisive factors which can be exploited by employers and utilised to assist in the maintenance of the status quo.

The working classes can and are divided by colour, by ethnic origins and by religion. In the USA colour is a divisive factor; in West Germany and Switzerland the division is between indigenous workers and short-term immigrants; in France, as in Great Britain, white workers are divided from coloured immigrants. Northern Ireland provides a case where religion divides the working class. In some instances the divisions have protecting, insulating qualities for the dominant power holding groups in the working class. In West Germany and Switzerland, for example, the flow of short-term immigrant workers from Italy, Yugoslavia, Spain and Greece, enables work-force requirements to be met for the economies as a whole and acts as a basis for their prosperity. The working classes there are protected from economic pressures which could result from less prosperous conditions.

Working class movements are reflections of the societies in which they operate. They are penetrated by the divisive elements present in the market mechanism. The interests of workers are opposed in manufacturing and agriculture, in manufacturing and public service, in expanding and contracting areas, in exporting and non-exporting industries, in new and declining occupations. Wherever new machinery is introduced and old skills diluted or jobs displaced, sharp divisive forces are present. The more intensely the prime contradiction affects the point of production making for class unity, the more, up to a point, it generates class divisive elements. This creates situations of apparent confusion. The present situation in Great Britain is at the stage of confusion where acts of class unity coincide with intense bitterness and rivalry between groups.

In an analysis of this kind the socialising factors are relatively unimportant. As behaviour is primarily environmentally determined then attitudes cannot be generated for long which are inconsistent with the reality of workers' lives. The important factors are those which make up that reality. In the same way it is not possible to go further with education and political activity in the development of consciousness than concrete situations permit. It is not possible as the French experience in 1968 illustrated, to create a revolutionary situation when the conditions for revolution are not present.

The French experience raises a vital question for the understanding of revolutionary change in contemporary capitalism. It is, what constitutes a revolutionary situation? How can it be identified? It cannot be assumed that the factors which led to revolutionary change in Czarist Russia, Kuomintang China and Batista's Cuba will also lead to change elsewhere. Firstly, whilst those societies had primary qualities in common they had sufficiently different historical backgrounds and superstructures to make generalisations untenable. Secondly, as societies are moulded and altered by complexes of contradictions over time so must the factors which can alter their structures change. In other words, revolutionary situations are not static but dynamic phenomena. It is necessary to take into account the uniqueness of a society at a particular period. It might be misleading, therefore to look for conventional signs of breakdown such as a high level of unemployment and increasing poverty.

The actual signs in contemporary capitalism may be far less obtrusive. Contradictions affect the relative positions of the groups which comprise the classes. It is an empirical task to discover the impact of such changes within complex labour forces on consciousness. It is equally necessary to examine in the light of contemporary conditions the determinants of change in other aspects of the total structure of particular societies.

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Discussion Contributions on:

Strategy of Socialist Revolution in Britain

James Harvey

I suggest that Bert Pearce's very comprehensive review of the *British Road* suffers from one grave defect. It is too complacent. The *British Road* was indeed a great advance when it was published 20 years ago. But if it is still the right programme and needs no important revision, as he claims, why has it not helped the Communist Party to increase its members and influence, especially during the past few years when some important objective factors—the rise in industrial militancy of the working class, the growing interest in Marxism and the rise of the student movement—have turned in our favour? Bert Pearce might at least have asked this question.

The *British Road* was adopted in 1951—five years before the 20th Congress of the CPSU. Important revisions were made in 1957, but it has not yet been subjected to the fundamental reappraisal that was needed in the light of that Congress. The extraordinary difficulties and profound disappointments which have accompanied the building of socialism in the Soviet Union and other countries receive no analysis whatever in the *British Road* and are dismissed in a single short sentence on the penultimate page: "Socialist countries do not claim to be utopias, free of problems". This might well qualify as one of the greatest understatements of this century.

Correcting Past "Errors"

Bert Pearce does refer to the additional complications caused by the "very complex distortions of Soviet democracy" and he claims that the process of correcting "the effects of past errors" that has gone on since 1956 has given an impetus to new creative Marxist thinking. This is true, but it is also a comforting way of avoiding any serious analysis of the kind of socialism that has developed in the Soviet Union and elsewhere.

James Klugmann, in his article on socialist democracy in the May 1970 *Marxism Today*, also uses the term "errors" to describe the secret police terror and all the other developments of Soviet society under Stalin of which he disapproves. It seems to me that the use of the word "errors" in this context is questionable, because it must tend to have the effect of discouraging a scientific investigation into why these things happened. We do not normally describe the atrocities committed by British Imperialism, or the Nazi terror and concentration camps, or the apartheid system in South Africa, as "errors"—though supporters of capitalism, who have an idealist picture in their minds of how capitalism ought to work, will be inclined to call them "errors", or perhaps "distortions of capitalism."

It is difficult to see how we can justify the application of one standard to an investigation of capitalism and another to socialism. Surely the main purpose of any discussion about the Soviet Union is to discover why the socialist state developed in the way it did under Stalin, in order that the world socialist movement can learn how to do better in future. It is a matter of deepening our understanding of the way society develops after a socialist revolution or, in other words, of developing historical materialism so as to take account of the entire experience of Soviet society. But instead of this, the approach of Bert Pearce and James Klugmann and of the *British Road* reflects the position which has prevailed in the Communist Party ever since 1956—a strong reluctance to move from the level of rather abstract and general pronouncements about socialist democracy to a concrete analysis of the Soviet state and of other socialist states.

National and International Factors

There ought to be a special section in the *British Road* devoted to the Soviet Union. It is necessary to find the right balance—and this is not at all easy—between expressing solidarity with the Soviet Union in its struggle against imperialism and in all its great positive socialist advances, and making an analysis of the characteristics of Soviet society. This balance could be reached if more emphasis were to be placed on the role of national factors in determining the structure of any socialist state and in the degree of socialist democracy achieved by any such state. It is necessary to distinguish, more clearly than we have yet done, between what is of universal significance in

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the Russian Revolution and its subsequent development and what is of local, national significance. The historical traditions of Tsarist Russia, together with the incredibly difficult conditions prevailing in the years after 1917, have had a profound influence on the Soviet state, just as the bourgeois-democratic traditions of Britain, and the quite different conditions in which the socialist revolution will occur, will have a profound influence on the character of the British socialist state.

I believe it can be shown that the shortcomings in the socialist states are mainly derived from their capitalist and even feudal past which clings to them, in Santiago Carillo's words, "like a poisonous heritage". It this is so, we do no service to the cause of socialism by avoiding a frank recognition of the problem. On the contrary, the case against capitalism is strengthened by an exposure of the ways in which its evil, corrupting influence persists after it has been abolished.

The *British Road* is also affected in two other ways by its failure to make a realistic analysis of the experiences of the socialist states.

Dissent

The *British Road*, especially in the form it took after 1956, was a major advance in working out a programme and strategy adapted to British conditions, recognising as it did the significance of our parliamentary traditions, rejecting a one-party system and envisaging freedom for other political parties even if they are opposed to socialism. It also pledges that there will be an extension of freedom of speech and of civil liberties in a socialist Britain.

Our enemies allege, however, that we only defend democratic rights now in order to use them to gain power and that a revolutionary government would restrict or abolish them rather than let them be used against it. They point out that ever since 1936 the right to freedom of speech has been enshrined in the Soviet Constitution, and yet there is press censorship, a writer of the standing of Solzhenitsyn cannot get his books published, and a young author like Amalrik can be sentenced to three years in a labour camp for "dissemination of falsehoods derogatory to the Soviet state and social system."

The best way to answer this argument is surely to attempt in the *British Road* to give some explanation of how it has been possible for a socialist society to evolve in the way it has in the Soviet Union, and to make clear the reasons why socialism in Britain is bound to be very different from the Soviet model, not least in the field of civil liberties.

Utopian Picture of Socialism

The picture of a socialist Britain that is drawn in the *British Road* seems to me unconvincing in that it verges on the Utopian. There is a tendency to suggest that we know all the answers, instead of showing how socialism would release the creative energies of the people so that they would be capable of overcoming the difficulties involved in constructing a completely new kind of society, On page 69 it is claimed that "we have not hidden the difficulties". But nowhere in the *British Road* is there a realistic assessment of the problems that would arise. To take only one example, there is not a single reference to bureaucracy, i.e., to all the problems arising from the relations between the permanent apparatus of officials ("specialists in ruling" as Lenin called them) and the people. The experience of building socialism in the Soviet Union and other countries shows that this is likely to be a major problem, which will be aggravated by the bureaucratic traditions inherited from capitalist society and by the tremendous task of creating a centrally-planned economy. It is understandable that, before the first socialist revolution had taken place, Marx, Engels and also Lenin (in *State and Revolution*) should have greatly underrated the dangers of bureaucracy. But over 50 years later we have no justification for doing so.

In his article Bert Pearce suggests that the unusually rich experience of the British working class in forming organisations of the most varied kinds will ensure that socialist democracy will be defended against any tendency to bureaucratic over-centralisation. This is surely the approach which ought to be adopted in the *British Road.*

The Broad Alliance

One of the central conceptions of the *British Road* is that the working class will be able to build a broad popular alliance uniting all "working people" against monopoly capitalism which can pave the way for the transition to socialism. On page 28 the composition of the broad alliance is given as:
"workers in factories, offices, professions, working farmers, producers and consumers, owner-occupiers and tenants, housewives, young people and students, pensioners, workers in the peace movement and those active in defence of democracy . . ."
This really is an extraordinary mixture of different classes and categories appearing and reappearing in different guises as producers and consumers, young and old, etc., etc. Other passages refer to "professional workers" and to "white collar workers' and to "all whose interests are threatened by monopoly capitalism" but nowhere in the *British Road* is there a clear description of the classes that are to compose the broad alliance—a remarkable omission for a programme based on Marxism.

The *British Road* is ambiguous in its treatment of white collar workers. On page 26 it says that the white collar workers "whose interests are bound up with those of the working class . . . are increasingly

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important", which implies that they are not part of the working class. On page 29 "professional workers" are treated as separate from the working class, and on page 27 the working class is described as the "core of the broad popular alliance" which again implies a restrictive interpretation. Thus the *British Road* tends to identify the working class with the manual workers, a view which is no longer tenable and was rightly rejected by Alan Hunt in his article on class structure in *Marxism Today*, June 1970.

The increasing willingness of wide sections of white collar workers to organise in trade unions and to take militant action to defend their interests is one of the most important developments in recent years. There is a prospect that a revolutionary movement among the industrial workers could win wide support among technicians, specialists and intellectual workers performing key functions to industry, in the mass media and in the state apparatus itself. The May events in France showed the possibility of "seizing power largely from the inside as well as from the outside" as Santiago Carillo puts it in his book *Problems of Socialism Today* (p. 133).

If it is right to treat the great majority of white collar workers as part of the working class, then who are the "working people" which the *British Road* wants the working class to form an alliance with? They can only be the small shopkeepers, small farmers, the self-employed and the small businessmen—though only the working farmers are explicitly mentioned in the *British Road*. Thus they comprise the petit-bourgeoisie. While it is of course important to win as many of them as possible for socialism, they are a declining section of the population and cannot compare in importance with the white collar workers. This whole section of the *British Road* surely needs widespread discussion and the most thorough revision.

The Intellectuals

Finally, one very important category of the population, the intellectuals, receives no mention whatever in the *British Road*, which in general pays very little attention to the vital problem of ideological struggle and the need to develop Marxist theory. There is no space to develop this crucial topic here; but the revolutionary movement will never win the battle of ideas unless it also gains the support of an important section of the intellectuals. This ought to be included in the *British Road*.

Effects of Imperialism upon Britain

John Ure*

Although a Marxist I am not a member of the CP; indeed I have some fundamental disagreements with it. May I be permitted therefore to comment upon my friend Ron Bellamy's article (May 1971) "The Effects of Imperialism upon Britain".

One aspect of modern imperialism Ron raises is the growing level of poaching by the top powers in each other's front gardens. Previously "direct investments by monopolists of one country in the territory of another imperialist power, and the attempt to dominate it economically and politically, had yet to become a typical and crucial new feature of inter-imperialist relations. Now it has." Ron then follows this statement one paragraph later with this: "This would be a matter of little concern to the internal opponents of imperialism if it were not that export of US capital to Britain is not only capitalist exploitation, but also economic and political domination of our people."

Now as a Marxist it is quite sufficient for me that it is precisely "capitalist exploitation" for within that phrase, as Marxists define both words, lies the source of economic and political domination that *characterise this epoch*. Under pre-capitalist modes of production domination was, of course, of a totally different nature involving different classes. To separate the concepts and to state that "capitalist exploitation" "would be a mater of little concern to the internal opponents of imperialism" were it not for the fact that it was also unfortunately accompanied by "economic and political domination of our people" suggests, to be kind, a confusion of the Marxist method of analysis. In fact the phrase "our people" goes so far as to question the use of scientific Marxist terminology altogether (the only natural definition that springs to mind is the anthropoid ape).

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But if this were all, if all it boiled down to was a mere question of careless or loose methodology, my criticism would be no more than academic. However there is more to it than that. There is the argument, sometimes implicit and sometimes explicit, that the real enemy is not imperialism as such, but other people's imperialism which is pressurising the British ruling class to screw more and more out of the British working class. This is indeed the obverse of the argument that when Britain was the top dog of imperialism in the late nineteenth century her superprofits featherbedded the working class (or rather an influential minority section of it) and laid the roots of reformism. It is the obverse with a twist. No Marxist could argue that because reformism 'worked' as an ideology that implaccable opposition and hostility to it were not absolutely necessary. As Ron says, "These short-term advantages for a minority of the class have had a double price—the slaughter and the danger of slaughter of the class in imperialist war and, even if that danger recedes, the destruction of the unity of that class, without which it cannot emancipate itself from capitalism" And so we come to the hub of the matter. "The weakening of opportunism's material basis (i.e. Britain's declining industrial/financial world position—JU) is therefore a matter of crucial importance."

Little Englandism

This is absolutely correct. At this moment in our history, when Britain's imperial world position is inevitably crumbling, when the US is enhancing its domination of European industry and commerce, when the growth of the Eurobond market increasingly threatens the stability of the pound sterling, and as the Common Market debate hots-up with cries in defence of the "sovereignty" of the Houses of Parliament and the "British way-of-life", more and more efforts will be made to spread the new ideology, the false-consciousness of Little Englandism. The reactionary economics of Enoch Powell and the reformism of Thomas Balogh find common cause. The anti-monopoly small-businessman (the socio-economic basis in the past for fascism and today for Powellism) and the anti-French conservative farming community will seek common interest with the trade unionist. For Marxists to fight this possibly attractive new false-consciousness within the reformist-dominated British labour movement an absolute implaccable hostility must once again be displayed on every level, at every opportunity. The traps of "opportunism" and "class-collaboration" are enormous and will not be avoided unless clear, unequivocal analyses are forthcoming. Let me quote a concrete example which fails to be unambiguous. "In part, then, we can draw a parallel between today and the 1920's and 1930's—political collaboration with foreign imperialist and reactionary forces bent on world domination, with the consequence, now as then, *of betrayal of Britain's strategic and national interests;* economic struggle, within that collaboration, against rival monopoly groups, *leading to economic and political attacks upon non-monopoly sections of our people.*" (My emphasis)

The ruling ideology of society is the ideology of the ruling class. This is equally true when applied to the "national interest". The "interest" of the ruling class is not necessarily clear-cut and homogenous within its ranks (e.g. small businessmen versus monopoly capitalists) but for whatever faction of the ruling class it stands in objective rivalry to the "interest" of the working class. Tactically one section of the ruling class may find it desirable for its own ends to ally itself with the aspirations of the working class, but never *strategically*. As a Marxist I hope I am never afraid to state openly that I do not care a hoot for, indeed I am totally hostile to, the interests of the petit-bourgeoisie and other similar "non-monopoly sections of our people."

Again, "aggressive US imperialism, not only endangers our national existence in the military field, but makes our economy vulnerable to US economic penetration." Please excuse me for one facetious moment while I ask which corner of the world should we have been dominating were it not for these confounded Yanks? Or is it the demise of the Home Guard we should be commiserating? And are we to prefer the exploitation of labour under the hegemony of good old-fashioned British capital rather than pushy young upstart US capital? Since "our economy" belongs to "our" capitalist class then patriotism would demand that "we" said "yes". Surely it isn't the *nationality of the capital* that a class analysis should emphasize but rather as an immediate tactical question for the trade unions the *relative rates of exploitation of labour obtaining under different capitals.*

To fight against "our" ruling classes' strategy of anti-trade union legislation we must be able to fight free from all ruling class ideology by a fight against the chauvinism (witness the Common Market debate) and jingoism (witness the immigration debate) of Little Englandism. This is not yet a task clearly seen by many Marxists: "the twin menace to the entirety of British life—the super-monopolies' aim to smash free trade unionism and to *sacrifice our national sovereignty in the Common Market.*" (Joe Berry, *Marxism Today* May '71. My emphasis—JU).

It might well be, of course, that I assume too much in this commentary. Maybe the defeat of the British ruling class at the hands of its international rivals is seen by some comrades as an added problem for the British labour movement. The loss of one jot of

(Concluded on page 149)

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